The Technique of
Screen Writing

How to Write and Sell Film Stories

BY FRANCES MARION

● *With a complete shooting script for "MARCO POLO" by Robert E. Sherwood*

$3.50

HOW TO WRITE AND SELL FILM STORIES

by FRANCES MARION

Here at last is the practical, authoritative manual on the technique of writing for the motion pictures that thousands of authors have been waiting for. And it is by no less a person than Frances Marion, the highest paid and most uniformly successful film story writer in the world. For years she has been deluged by letters asking what producers require of film stories, and how they can be sold. Unable to answer all the letters individually, she has now made available the fruits of her skill and experience in a book that is graphic, useful and easily comprehensible.

Miss Marion throws open the secrets of a highly remunerative profession. She points out that the film companies must produce about a thousand pictures a year, and that there is an acute shortage of good story material. The market is there. The writer need only know how to tap it.

After an introductory chapter on producers' general requirements, Miss Marion devotes a chapter to each of the following topics: characterization, with special emphasis on photographic characterization and the means of obtaining photographic objectivity; plots, accept-

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HOW TO WRITE AND SELL FILM STORIES

by Frances Marion

WITH A COMPLETE SHOOTING SCRIPT
FOR MARCO POLO
BY ROBERT E. SHERWOOD

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DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF

IRVING THALBERG

AS A TRIBUTE TO HIS VISION AND GENIUS

FOREWORD

All art consists in surmounting difficulty to produce beauty.

WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

DURING the twenty years that I have been writing stories for the motion-picture companies, I have received, in number far beyond my power to answer, appeals to criticize stories intended for the screen, and to give advice on writing and selling them. In this handbook, I have endeavored to give information that will enable would-be writers of salable stories to direct their energies toward giving the motion-picture studios what they want, and to criticize their own work understandingly. I have included much of the practice based on my own experience not only in writing for the screen, but also in directing motion pictures. An established writer may experiment as he will, for the film story is wholly pragmatic—whatever pleases the public is acceptable; what does not is useless—but every art has a technical side which the tyro must learn through the understanding and application of certain rules and not until after technique is acquired can creative ability function effectively.

It seems to me that one very definite reason for the great number of rejected manuscripts that flow from studios and agents is the attempt to sell stories in continuity or "scenario" form, the form with which the free lance is most unlikely to succeed. The writer who wishes to sell stories to the studios should concern himself not with camera angles and continuity devices, but with dramatic story-telling.

Another outstanding reason for the great number of unacceptable stories is the narrowness of much of the instruction and advice given by book and class to those who wish to write for the screen. Many of these stories indicate the author's understanding of the mechanics of writing and of plot building, but they indicate also that he has only a very superficial understanding of emotion and of dramatic effects. For this reason, I have briefly outlined in the Chapters on Motivation, Emotion, and Dramaturgy, those matters that a writer must comprehend if he would lift his stories above mediocrity.

The creation of a screen story offers plenty of opportunity for genius. The masterpiece for a day has its place and value in the scheme of things as well as the masterpiece written for all time.

I take this occasion to express my sincere appreciation of my associates at the studios in Hollywood. I know of no group as painstaking and consistent in their efforts to improve the quality of their work. I am indebted to Mrs. Kate Corbaley of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, whose judgment and helpful advice I have valued for many years; to Mr. Samuel Marx of Samuel Goldwyn Pictures for his excellent suggestions in connection with this volume; and to Miss Eldred Johnstone for her encouragement and constructive criticism.

I wish to record my thanks to Mary Heaton Vorse and to Professor William Lyon Phelps for permission to use quotations from their works; also to the Guaranty Trust Company of New York for a quotation from a speech by Theodore Roosevelt; and to the following publishers for quotations by the authors mentioned:

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HOW TO WRITE
AND SELL
FILM STORIES

I. THE MOTION PICTURE STORY

Fashions change and tastes differ, but in the hearts of the great theater-going public there is a longing for romance, for idealism, for the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice. Dull lives require a little joy, and every man and woman, however small or great, comes to the theater to sit on a magic carpet and be wafted to the place which is seen only in dreams.

—COSMO HAMILTON, "UNWRITTEN HISTORY"

FOR the first time since the very early years of the motion-picture industry, agents dealing with the studios are welcoming stories by talented free-lance writers. During the last decade, story editors faced with the necessity of supplying the studios with more and more fiction suitable for the screen have been urging that the work of the free-lance writer be given consideration, but not until much of the existent fiction had been used did producers encourage agents to submit the work of writers unknown to the public. Today, any writer who can create effective stories will find that the motion pictures offer him his best-paying market. Screen stories running from thirty to one hundred and fifty pages may sell for any sum from $200 to $25,000, according to the reputation of the author for writing "hits" and the possibilities in the story. A writer who sells two or three stories that are satisfactory is quite likely to be offered a contract at an excellent salary and, if his work is effective, competition for his services may boost it, eventually, to a thousand dollars a week or more.

Studio experience is unnecessary. Original stories are most acceptable when written in simple non-technical language. They must, however, have certain elements that I have outlined in this volume.

This new and great opportunity for the amateur writer, and the writer more or less known who has yet to sell fiction to the studios, arises from the fact that the most difficult problem before the motion picture companies in Hollywood and elsewhere today is to get enough stories that are adapted to picturization. With all its amazing technical advance, with all its accomplishments, the screen still lacks assurance of a continuing sufficiency of satisfying story material, and the demand for fiction that can be made into financially successful screen plays always exceeds the supply. For the story is the basis of the photoplay. More than ever since the advent of the "talkies," it is the most important of all the factors that determine the success of a picture. The most popular star, beautiful setting, and intelligent directing cannot overcome the lack of a good story, while, on the other hand, a good story will help to overcome inadequate acting or direction. When, as happens all too frequently, no stories adapted to their particular types are available, stars and directors drawing immense salaries wait idly for days and weeks, and the mounting overhead drives the producers to accept whatever stories are at hand, mediocre though they may be.

The demand for stories suitable for filming is so great that the studios spend large sums of money in their efforts to find them. All the larger companies have editorial departments, not only in Hollywood, but also in New York and other Eastern cities. These departments, in addition to examining all the material sent in by publishers and agents, employ scouts who constantly hunt for news of forthcoming books and plays. They canvass agents, publishers, the better-known authors and playwrights in the hope of securing desirable material before a rival studio gets it. The editorial staff scans the book catalogs, searches the magazines, and investigates the possibilities in unpublished book manuscripts, unproduced plays and original stories. Old magazines, old books, those in foreign languages, and the output of repertory theaters are examined. The story editors of the various companies keep extensive files indexing and synopsizing the literature of the world. They have libraries with thousands of volumes of novels, plays, biographies, and manuscripts. Files of all the fiction magazines are kept and their current issues checked as they are issued. Even though a story has been purchased by a rival company, each studio keeps a record of it because it often is possible to buy the rights from the studio possessing them.

Each of the major companies publishes, for the benefit of its officials, a weekly bulletin containing very short summaries of all new material discovered by the Hollywood and New York departments and, in some cases, their agents in London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and other European centers.

When a novel is in the course of publication, sets of galley proofs are turned over to the studios and the picture rights are often sold long before the book itself is offered to the public. The rights to more than two hundred books are purchased annually by the motion picture companies at a cost of as much as two million dollars. In fact, the rights to every novel and every stage play having any degree of success are purchased unless the subject matter is censorable or otherwise unsuitable for filming, and they occasionally are purchased when nothing but the title of the book or play can be used. Studios have spent from $200,000 to $500,000 for rights and writers alone in their struggles to build a good screen story out of a popular novel. The right to screen a novel may cost from $1,000 to $175,000. The right to produce *Dodsworth*, by Sinclair Lewis, cost a studio $165,000. The cost of rights to stage plays runs even higher than that of novels. $125,000 was paid for *Street Scene*, and *You Can't Take It With You* brought a top figure of $200,000.

It is doubtful that there ever have been enough good plays to keep the theatrical stage the thriving and vital institution that it should be, and if difficulty is experienced in getting enough material for the stage, consider the problem facing the motion-picture companies, which altogether require material for possibly a thousand pictures every year. Obviously, there are not enough adaptable novels and stage plays to meet half their needs. At present, probably not more than one-third of the total number of pictures made annually is based on novels, and many so-called adaptations of novels are actually original stories written by staff writers, but given the title of the supposedly adapted book.

Another factor that tends to strengthen the demand for original stories is the excessive cost of adapting novels and plays. Much of that cost is due to the fact that they were created for a medium different from the screen. When you read that a certain picture cost a studio an enormous amount before it was ready for shooting, you can be almost certain that the larger part of the sum was incurred because story material from a novel or stage play required a great deal of building up and rearranging before it could be filmed. The balance sheet, plus the increasing insistence on economy by the financial powers that exploit the screen, has forced the studios to recognize the value of the original story written understandingly for picturization. A study of the most successful motion pictures produced during a period of years demonstrates the financial advantages inherent in the story written with plot and characterization designed for the screen and not merely hacked and patched to fit it.

Though it may seem reasonable to assume that any person who can write a popular novel will be able to adapt it for screening, many a novelist, when brought to the studio for that purpose, has failed to produce a screenable story. The novelist, however, is not necessarily at fault. A slight examination of his book would show, in most cases, that the type of writing that brought him fame is quite different from that required by the photoplay. That which is written to be read, of necessity differs from that which is written to be acted. One needs expository comment; the other, the depiction of expressive action. He has been expected to adapt his material to another medium, much as if a painter were asked to express his vision through marble instead of in his usual oils. Nor has it been clearly recognized that story material that lends itself with interest to one medium may not lend itself at all to another. The story properly designed for photographing should differ radically from the story designed for the stage or for book publication. You will see how different are the three media—stage, publication and screen—if you will consider how impossible it would be to present on the stage a motion picture in its entirety, or if you will examine some of the "movie versions" of popular novels.

Because the novelist is under no obligation to take into account the needs of the photoplay and all the factors that affect its screening, a beautifully written and interesting book may require considerable rearrangement and development of its action and much additional material before it is worth picturizing. Nor is the novel circumscribed by a specific form or restricted as to subject-matter as is the screen story. The modern novel, especially, seems to be under almost no limitation. It may be almost incomprehensible to vast sections of the public and yet find a publisher. It may preach, lecture, scold or daydream, and yet sell an impressive number of copies. On the other hand, its subject-matter, its treatment, its acting opportunity or lack of it, all affect the novel's value for the screen. Novels, for example, that deal with miscegenation, novels that treat the institution of marriage disrespectfully and many psychological novels are ruled out. Then, too, the film play must neither lecture nor attempt to discuss anything with its audience. It must, above all things, record *continuing action;* and neither beautiful description nor fascinating accounts of the thought processes of individuals can take its place. A passage in a novel may touch a reader to the point of tears and yet offer no chance for acting because the idea rises and remains entirely in the mind of the character. A situation that is touching or impressive when read may, if acted, move an audience to laughter.

If the novel's large scope affects its value for screening, the stage play is sometimes of small value for the screen because its design is circumscribed by many restraints that do not apply at all to the photoplay. The stage play has developed its present form very largely because of the physical limitations of the theater. The screen has all but conquered time and space; in the ninety minutes or less allotted for a picture, its characters may circle the globe. It packs ten times as much action into one-half the time of the stage play, and it has definitely greater possibilities for spectacular effects. It presents natural settings, not merely painted or more or less symbolic backgrounds, and its action is never halted to wait for scene shifters. Photographing a successful stage play during its performance would not result in a successful moving picture; the effect would be extremely artificial for, in the stage play, "the line's the thing." On the screen, it is the expression of emotion, very largely through physical action.

The theatrical world discovered, long ago, that plays designed directly for the stage were preferable to those adapted from books; and, also, that it required a very skillful playwright to make an "acting" play out of material found in a novel. Theatrical producers, like those of the screen, are driven to use adaptations of novels because of lack of good original plays, but their production record is enlightening. During four recent theatrical seasons, a total of approximately 805 stage plays was produced. Of this 805, only thirty were adaptations of novels; and of this number, only eight could justifiably be called hits.

It is true, of course, that though the original screen story has long since won its laurels, the motion-picture producers naturally try to profit through the publicity that has been acquired by a best-seller or a stage hit and probably always will seek to use them, but there are proportionately few of these, and the competition for them is keen and costly.

A motion picture—so many feet of photographed film—has a short life. Once it has made its rounds, it is done; therefore the demand for film stories will always be insistent. And since producers now are in the market for a larger amount of fiction written directly for the screen, there exists a greater opportunity for the amateur writer. It will pay the beginner, therefore, to spend time and effort in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the screen's particular needs and possibilities. The remuneration is outstanding, because the studios can well afford to pay the author more than can the magazines, and more than is apt to accrue to him from any but the best-selling novels.

When I started selling my stories to the motion-picture studios twenty years ago, the attitude of producers toward authors in general was much like that of the old lady who, when asked what architect she was employing to remodel her home, exclaimed, "Architects, huh! What do they do but get in the way of the carpenters?" Carpenters were far more essential to the early producers than were writers. In fact, the first pictures were shot without a story of any kind except that which developed in the mind of the director during the shooting. Soon, however, the writer was recognized as a convenience. It saved time and money to have a story in tangible form, especially when the director or producer ran out of plot material. But they thought $100 was an enormous sum to pay for a story! They also took it for granted that they could improve anything written by an author, and they frequently did. Increasing competition and the development of the "talkies" with their need for characteristic dialogue have long since served to make the writer indispensable to the studios. Yet it should be remembered that, from the producer's angle, the author is only one of the large number of persons concerned with a picture—the men who finance the production, the company executives, the actors, the numerous and important varieties of technicians, the censors and the public. The financial powers that rule the companies expect the producer to make a picture within the limits of a certain sum and a specified time, and his contracts may require him to make a definite number of pictures annually. The amateur writer occasionally loses sight of the fact that the first and only object of commercial picture production is to make money.

It is essential that the writer remember also that his story must offer sufficient material of a basically popular type to justify the high cost of making it into a picture. To screen a motion picture costs possibly a dozen times the cost of putting on a stage play. The million-dollar picture production is not uncommon; some have cost two million or more. It cost about $850,000 to produce *Swing Time*. *Strike Me Pink* is reported to have cost as much as $1,600,000, of which $300,000 went to cameramen and directors; about $500,000 for stars and featured players, $20,000 for dancers and $50,000 for extras. Settings and costumes ran up a bill of approximately $200,000. A setting showing an amusement park cost $75,000; a night club set with an $8,000 black glass floor ran up to $20,000. The film itself, that is, the negative and its development, cutting, and so on, cost around $200,000. In *The Great Ziegfeld*, it cost $250,000 to film a single spectacular feature. Some pictures, particularly the psychological or problem or "talky" film, may get along with less than a dozen sets; but *Anthony Adverse* required the building of one hundred and thirty.

In offering a story which calls for pageant, panorama or spectacle, the effects must be sufficiently impressive to justify their cost.

In my first years with the studios, not only were there no textbooks that might aid me in discovering what were the essentials for the screen story, but, worse yet, there seemed to be no one, not even among those persons most closely concerned with picture production, who had any clear idea of what they were. Producers, directors and writers had to proceed on a rule of thumb basis and to learn through experience. Since then we have found that there are enough common elements and qualities in any representative group of financially successful pictures to provide some guides and rules for writers. It is true that exceptions to the rules appear frequently on the screen, but they merely make clear the value of the rules.

The successful writer builds according to a plan that recognizes the conditions and requirements confronting him. He knows that the story must have a particular structure and that no amount of polish will conceal structural defects. Professionals are well aware, also, of the arbitrary restrictions that studio executives and other forces, including censorship of various kinds, have placed on stories intended for photoplays.

The producers' demands for certain types of stories are based on reports made by individual theater-owners and managers throughout the country. These reports are collected and compiled by the motion-picture trade magazines and while there often is wide variation between the findings of individual theater owners, their reports do indicate clearly the more popular pictures. It is not enough, therefore, that a story be one that the author thinks is likely to satisfy an audience. Obviously it must be one that also will satisfy the people who buy the film stories and who have to pay the enormous cost of producing them. Some of these requirements may not appear to be based on facts, or even, at times, on common sense, but they cannot be ignored. You must write what the studios want, not what you think they ought to want; and in the end, you may find that these restrictions and demands work to your advantage. It is just this having to work within certain limitations that may give your story its coherence and its punch.

The demand for technique assists rather than hampers inspiration and, as in any other art, the technique of the film story involves a recognition of the ideal method of organizing and using material to accomplish a specific purpose. Inspiration may provide you with ideas. Technique will enable you to convey your ideas to others in the best possible manner. As in any other line of artistic endeavor, form is absolutely essential, although the more practice you gain, the less conscious will you be of it. Technique, of course, includes more than merely writing down an idea in a certain way; it involves your own recognition of all the aspects of what you seek to present.

There is plenty of hard work, but no mystery, in writing film stories. Though any form of dramatics may be an art rather than a science, at present the film story comes nearer to being written to formula than does any other type of writing. Some producers even believe it is possible to produce pictures that will please practically everyone who sees them —although managers of motion picture theaters have yet to be convinced of this. The latter know that in their audiences there are too many differences—physical, intellectual, emotional, environmental—between members of the same group, to make them all respond to the same appeal. The all-too-frequent attempts to make a picture of universal appeal often result in the production of one keyed to nothing but a low level of intelligence. However, the formation of classes and clubs for the study of motion-picture appreciation has done much to stimulate intelligent appraisal, and eventually should arouse an impressive demand for pictures of a higher standard.

It is worth your while, as a writer, to make a systematic study of box-office successes. See pictures a second or third time, if necessary, in order that you may observe the sequence of the action, the development of emotion, and the interpolated or incidental comedy. Note the proportion of dialogue, and watch the way important traits of character are kept before the audience. Distinguish between those effects that are inherent in the story itself and those that should be credited to the acting or directing.

An understanding knowledge of human nature is more important to the writer of the film story than is a knowledge of studio terminology, yet he should have some familiarity with the processes of picture production. He should know not only the general range of camera angles, but also how, after a story is selected, locations are found, sets built, and studies made of the effects to be secured through sound and possibly through color; how casts are selected and rehearsed, how sound is recorded and how film is edited, cut and arranged in the most interesting sequence. He should know that if a preview reveals weaknesses in the picture, situations are reshot or eliminated, or new ones added, until the picture pleases the producing powers. He should realize also that while it is quite possible that he may write an excellent story only to have inadequate production rob it of much of its interest, it is much more likely that his story will profit by what expert direction does for it.

In addition, the professional film-story writer must keep up with the technical advance made in motion-picture production. The "talkies" give him far greater opportunity than did the silent picture; now, there is the colored picture with its esthetic appeal and its added emotional stimulation. The skepticism of producers and the difficulty of reproducing colored film too long delayed the general use of color on the screen. At first, overtones occasionally clung and certain color values were hard to get, but newer processes produce such fine results that success at reasonable cost is now assured. Shooting a picture in color is far more difficult than photographing it in black and white; and the general adoption of color will require radical changes not only in lighting and make-up, but also in set designing. The preparation of an interior to be photographed in color involves an enormous amount of detailed planning. The high cost of producing *Becky Sharp* was due very largely to the experimental use of color; and the production of *A Star Is Born,* the first color film in which the color values were so natural that they did not draw attention away from the story, cost over a million.

Color and light in movement will hold the attention of an audience even without the addition of any other dramatic force. An intensely interesting German photoplay consisted of nothing but flashes of light correlated to music. The writer must reckon with color, and consider situations and backgrounds offering opportunity for interesting use of it, especially in musical comedies, spectacles, and pictures with country settings.

Experiments are now being made with "three-dimensional" photography which is expected to give the pictures greater depth and to convey the illusion of three-dimensional form as found in real life. When perfected, this may allow the utilization of scenes and effects which are not now possible. Then, too, television is well on its way toward bringing the motion picture into the home and may open up a new market for photoplays of shorter length than those generally used by the motion-picture theaters.

Experience in any line of fiction writing is helpful to the film-story writer. Though ability to write beautiful prose and description is unnecessary, the writer who cannot express himself in clear and concise language is handicapped at the start because the film story must first convey its scenes through the medium of words and sentences. A poorly told story is unlikely to get past the studio editors. Ambiguous constructions and indistinguishably mixed pronouns may make it difficult for studio readers to understand a story and may thus cause its rejection; while smooth, clear, forceful and dramatic writing may help to sell it. Obviously, the only way that action or emotion can be expressed in the story is through words, and effectiveness comes through the proper selection and combination of words to bring out vitality, vivacity and sympathy. It is a discouraging fact that an extraordinary number of writers, and not only amateurs, do not know the actual meaning of many of the common words they use. Many a writer can conceive of dramatic situations and emotional reactions that are beyond his power to convey in words, but by applying himself regularly and consistently to his writing he will acquire not only skill in the use of words, but also habits and moods that will improve the quality and increase the quantity of his output. A certain momentum is derived from keeping everlastingly at it, and he who aspires to become a professional writer of film stories must "keep plenty of glue in his chair."

In the last analysis, it is the audience that determines whether or not a photoplay is a success or a failure. The test of a picture is its amount of "audience appeal" and because of this, producers seek to learn all they can of the likes and dislikes of the average audience. There is, of course, no such thing as an "average audience"; this phrase refers to a mythical audience suggested by a study of box-office returns and a study of the "mass mind." This audience is made up, presumably, of the young and old, wise and simple, cultured and illiterate, rich and poor, all seeking entertainment from one photoplay which, in addition, must appeal to audiences in foreign countries. As a unit, this audience always is more emotional and less intellectual than are its component members. It is represented by its lowest common feeling or attitude.

We have learned that this mythical average audience will contain more women than men; that it wants food for its imagination; that it prefers fundamentally human stories full of laughter and tears; that it wants its emotions aroused; that it wants something that will pleasantly excite it, amuse it, wring it with suspense, fill it with self-approval, or even arouse its indignation; it cries, as de Maupassant long ago observed, "console me, amuse me, sadden me, touch me, make me dream, laugh, shudder, weep!" and above all things, it wants to be "sent home happy." It looks to the photoplay to provide it with a substitute for actual life experience, and to function in such fashion the screen story must contain elements that are emotionally satisfying. Something approaching the ideal life is what this audience prefers to see, rather than life as it actually knows it. It wants to see interesting things which, within the limits of possibility, might happen to it; preferably things to which its own day dreams turn. It wants as much action as possible. It will not, in great numbers at least, go to see the gruesome or horrible. It is very "choosy" about costume photoplays, having shown lately a decided liking for the costume-musical. It seems not so interested in having situations logical, or even possible, as it is in having its pleasurable emotions aroused. And even as we discover all this, we find that our "average audience" is fairly unpredictable. It will spurn a picture that seems to have all the elements that made another picture successful; and yet it will, once in a while, accept one loaded with more or less stale hokum.

Few experienced producers will venture to predict the likes and dislikes of an audience at any given time. Too many factors enter into the situation. Local conditions have a tremendous influence; a picture that is successful in one place may fail in another. The public tires easily of pictures of the same type, and after a run of them will turn en masse to something that even the producers doubted would be a hit. It is said that only the desire of Will Hays, President of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, to see Louisa Alcott's *Little Women* filmed induced RKO to produce it. Every other studio turned it down as impossible material, and even the RKO officials had little hope that it would do more than pay its cost. It turned out to be one of the smash hits of the year.

Victor Hugo declared that "what the mass desires on the stage is sensational action; what the women seek is emotion and what the thoughtful crave is food for meditation. All demand pleasure; the first, the pleasure of the eyes; the second, the gratification of the feelings; the last, mental enjoyment. Thus on our scene are three distinct sorts of work; the one, common and inferior; the two others, illustrious and superior; but all supplying a want: melodrama for the crowd; tragedy which analyzes passion for the woman; and, for the thinkers, comedy that paints human nature."

The audience reacts definitely to titles. First of all, it wants titles that it can understand. The motion picture of *Ah, Wilderness*, Eugene O'Neill's delightful comedy, lost much of the popularity it deserved, because the title had little or no meaning for the average motion-picture goer. Cut off from the content of the verse from which it was taken, the phrase had only a suggestion of drabness. Best-sellers that have had hundreds of thousands of readers may have reached such a small proportion of the regular attendants of the motion pictures that screen plays carrying the titles of such books suggest nothing of the story to them. *Dodsworth* was an excellent picture, but in spite of Sinclair Lewis's many readers, the name was meaningless to a great section of the public that supports the picture theaters.

There is more significance than humor in the fact that many persons assumed that *The Doll's House* was a picture for "the kiddies," that the *Sky Pilot* dealt with aviation, the *Admirable Crichton* with the Navy, and that *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* was a Western.

Not only must titles be easily understandable, but they also must be easy to pronounce. People are not likely to recommend a photoplay, no matter how much they enjoyed it, if they do not know how to pronounce the title. *Cynara*, *Cythera*, *Les Miserables* and *Rendezvous* proved to be unfamiliar to many picture attendants.

Misleading and tricky titles, promising something the picture does not give, are annoying. Some of the motion-picture companies formerly attached excessively lurid titles to photoplays that did not live up to them, but it was discovered eventually that the public refused to be fooled in this fashion; also, that family groups were kept away from the theater by the fear that the pictures were as salacious as their titles suggested. That fashions in titles change, can easily be seen by anyone who compares the names given the early photoplays—*A Virtuous Vamp,* for example—with those of today.

It is distinctly unwise for the writer of film stories to regard the motion-picture audience as a group of morons or to assume that "its group intelligence is that of a "twelve-year-old." It cannot be said with any degree of reason that to wish to see pleasant things and to be made happy is a sign of mental inferiority. This audience, generally speaking, is composed of persons much like you or me. They have much the same desires, the same reactions. They come to the screen in an effort to obtain, for the time being, forgetfulness of the work and worry that seem to be their lot in life. They cannot enjoy themselves until they are interested to the point where they forget their troubles. The screen writer who builds his stories with a sympathetic understanding of their wants will be well repaid, for only through that invisible, intangible, yet most potent bond can the co-operation and responsiveness of the audience be aroused. I believe that one great essential for the film-story writer is a very real interest in his fellowmen. To use to the best advantage the story material that life so generously spreads before him, he must be able to distinguish human motives and to sympathize with the emotions of others.

Before going on to show how the film story should be built, I want to make clear just what is meant by an *original film story,* as screen terminology in various articles and books seems to vary considerably.

The *original film story* is not a continuity, nor a "scenario," nor an adaption. It is *original* fiction presented with the special plot content required for the photoplay. Its form, but *not* its content, is that of a story written for a magazine, and it does not require a technical knowledge of motion-picture photography.

A *continuity* is the transitional form between the film story and the picture itself. A story is one thing; a continuity is another, and it may cost thousands of dollars in staff writers' salaries to convert the first into the second. The continuity requires considerable technical knowledge of motion picture photography and other studio processes, and it is written practically always by writers on contract to the studios.

An *adaptation* is a story taken from a novel, play, biography, or magazine serial. It is *not* an original story written around some historical character.

The term *scenario* is to be avoided, because it has become meaningless through inexact application. Used exactly, it refers to the continuity script.

A *treatment* is merely a particular presentation of a story or its presentation from a particular angle. Many plots can be used to make a story either of pathos or comedy.

Occasionally, I use the terms *photoplay* and *film story* interchangeably as the film story must be written with the photoplay in mind; likewise the terms *reader* and *audience,* as the writer must be conscious that he is writing for both.

While this volume has chapters on the continuity and the adaptation, it is concerned chiefly with the original film story, because this is the particular form that offers the free lance writer the best opportunity to sell his product to the studios. Although such stories are also sold for educational and advertising purposes, this book deals only with the film story designed for the use of commercial motion-picture companies.

II. CHARACTERIZATION

In every life worth writing about, there is a ruling passion—"the very pulse of the machine." Unless you touch that, you are groping around outside of reality.

—HENRY VAN DYKE, "THE RULING PASSION"

VERY frequently someone tells me, "I have a wonderful plot for a movie!" I always am impelled to respond, "But have you interesting characters?"

Characterization is the most important factor in the film story, and no ingenuity or originality of the plot will save a photoplay which has inadequate characterization; which does not convey the illusion that the events are happening to real and living persons. I do not believe that it is possible to make a touching or impressive story with a set of shallow uninteresting characters; an audience will not care what happens to such persons. But it will be emotionally concerned over the fate of a richly endowed or an appealing character and it will remember him long after it has forgotten the plot in which he moved. More and more the demand will be for stories that are based on character, though this does not mean, necessarily, that they will have less action. Character portrayal alone has no dramatic quality. On the other hand, the purely action story with no character portrayal has so little significance that it fails to hold the interest of any except those of the lowest intelligence, and it has little claim to reality; character is needed to make the action logical. It is *character in action* that the film story must have.

Walter Pitkin has said, "Melodrama gets somewhere, but means nothing, while undramatic character writing gets nowhere, but means something." The film story in demand is the one that both gets somewhere and means something, because of its action based on character. The easiest way to destroy whatever illusion of reality it may have is to sacrifice character to plot.

Events, episodes, situations are interesting to us almost solely because of the human beings involved. It is what some person does in a given situation that is interesting, not the situation itself. Lincoln is more interesting than the Thirteenth Amendment; Joan of Arc is more interesting than the trial at Rouen. Let a barrel roll over Niagara Falls and you have merely an incident; put a man in the barrel and you have added the necessary factor to interest mankind. As George Pierce Baker pointedly says, "There can be no dramatic situation without human beings." Even in fantasy everything has to be personified and in the photoplays with animal actors, such as *Sequoia,* it is the human characteristics shown by the animals that make drama. The moving picture offers an opportunity for people vicariously to experience a tremendously varied life, because they are capable of seeing themselves in any situation that affects others and are capable of reacting to such situations. Therefore, first and last, they come to the photoplay to see the picture people in action.

It is only as events affect and are affected by people that they become significant, and because of this *plot action should arise from and be determined by character.* The plot that grows naturally in such fashion will be far more credible than one that has characters hacked and fitted to it; for the reason that, in real life, practically all situations are motivated, precipitated and manipulated by human characteristics. Out of character arises a certain inevitability of action. Very infrequently, if ever, does sheer chance play such an important part in our own lives that events occur which have not in some way been shaped and affected by our own traits and habits. Our joys, our sorrows, our failures, our successes, can be accounted for largely by our particular behavior and dispositions.

Give me an interesting personality with definite characteristics and I will find a plot inherent in the particular situations into which only his own individual traits could naturally lead him. Suppose, for example, that John Smith's dominant trait is his intense ambition to succeed in business. The difficulties in which he finds himself and the problems that face him will arise largely out of the things he does and the sacrifices he makes in order to achieve his ambition. The "jams" in which a headstrong thoughtless boy finds himself will be quite different from those that confront a sedate middle-aged man. A shiftless, slovenly person will find that these proclivities involve him in difficulties that never would involve a methodical orderly person. One consumed by greed does not get into the same situations as one with a generous nature. A brave man and a coward, a wise man and a fool, in all probability, will react in a different way toward any problem requiring their consideration.

A person's attitude toward others, or toward life in general, may reveal pride, self-respect, neuroticism, courage, weakness, common-sense, flightiness, selfishness or unselfishness. One man thinks first of others' needs, lastly of his own; another will think only of his own. Discourtesy naturally belongs to the villain rather than to the hero.

Character is not determined, though it may be very considerably colored, by environment, by the time in which a person lives, and by his occupation. A merchant living in New York City in the present era may have the same general characteristics as marked a merchant living in a ghetto in medieval times, and both might have the same dominating traits as a blacksmith or a judge living in either period, but their traits, benevolence or rapacity, for example, would be expressed in different ways.

Environment may increase or decrease the strength of a trait; luxury may dull ambition, and poverty sharpen desire. But these qualities are inherent, if latent, in the individual; they are not born of his environment. Naturally, a tendency toward any trait, be it thrift or chastity or dishonesty or thievishness, will develop more strongly in a place where such traits are approved and encouraged. The inhering traits tend to color and twist to agree with the environment, and thus the writer who builds characters and environment in harmony will increase the illusion of reality. Sometimes, for the sake of contrast, and if adequate motivation is presented, a character may be placed in an unnatural environment.

Racial differences more strongly affect character than do national ones. Like environment, but to a much lesser degree, nationality among the so-called civilized groups is a modifying force. Life experience, generally, is much the same in such nations, luckily for the motion-picture companies, otherwise each nation would need an entirely different type of story.

How do we judge a person in real life? Our first sight of a stranger gives us an impression of his physique, clothing and outstanding mannerisms. Longer acquaintance reveals his temperament, ethical and moral attitudes, culture, viewpoints, habits, attributes such as wit, thrift, kindness, and so on.

What makes one person's conduct different from another's? Unquestionably, the difference is caused by basic differences in their individual mental states; by the particular psychology attaching to each person. Habits of thought, good or bad, give a certain unity; and the thoughts, ideas and feelings which are a particular individual's response to life, are what sharply differentiates him from his fellow beings. "Our ideal," Aristotle said, "is what we consciously pursue; and our ideal is part of our character, even though we never attain it."

A distinction should be made between personality and character. A man of distinctly unpleasant character may have an attractive personality; the wolf may wear sheep's clothing. Personality includes mannerisms, superficial conduct and appearance, while character refers to the nature and quality of the individual.

According to long-standing and popular belief, characteristic mental attitudes affect personal appearance. The writer of film stories will waste his time if he attempts to persuade readers that a man with tight thin lips, sour expression and close-set eyes is a kindly, noble soul; nor are they likely to believe that a woman whose ordinary mode of thought is slovenly will groom herself exquisitely or select trim garb; or that an efficient business secretary is distinguished by ruffles, dangling earrings, disordered hair and flippant speech. People know that the dejected stoop and slouch, the joyous stand erect and stride, the miserly contract and the generous expand. But giving merely a physical description, no matter how meticulous, of a fictional character will not give the impression of reality. Far more important are his mental reactions, his loves, his hates, his desires. These things *are* the individual. These are the things that make him human. It was largely the "humanness" of Babbitt that made the book with that title a best-seller.

While striking physical peculiarities may form the basis of a plot or be called for by plot action, a greater illusion of reality is secured with characters who are differentiated by their mental habits. After all, a friend is not remembered by the color of his hair or eyes, but because of his thoughtfulness, kindness, humor or intellect; and as a rule it is far more important to show that your character has a passion for economy, or that he is extremely conscientious, or that he is afraid of cats, than that he has curly hair and blue eyes.

All this is objective characterization. It is demanded by the screen because, generally speaking, characters can become known to the audience only through external factors—appearance and behavior. If the audience is to respond to the characters with some definite feeling, whether of approval or disapproval; if it is to become, emotionally, part of the scene, *through its strong interest in or sympathy for some character*—then it must see definite, objective evidence of personality.

It is true, of course, in an important sense, that a character exists only in his emotions and sensations. Without the expression of feeling, he no more represents a living person than does a fleshless skeleton. If he does not realistically express some credible emotion himself, he will not be likely to arouse feeling in those who watch him. His own characteristics and the plot arrangement should set him in situations that plausibly arouse his own fear, hope, passion, desire, anger, love, jealousy or other emotion, and his own feeling should be expressed so realistically as to arouse emotion in the beholder. But while the physical expression of emotion is the actor's work, the writer of the film story must provide him with "an acting part," must make clear what emotion is to be expressed and through what action.

In a novel, the author may *tell* us that a character has a definite desire, or that he is adventurous, or cruel, or valiant; but the character thrust on the screen must *prove* that he possesses certain qualities. A hero must do heroic things; a villain must do villainous things, else he is not a villain. Characters must "give themselves away" by their deeds.

In other words, there must not only be action, but *all action must be significant*.

A character in a story intended for the screen must pay his way. Not only must he carry theme and plot, but also, except for such trivial acts generally accepted as natural, he must show a *reason* for his conduct. The audience is interested not only in what he does but, in addition, in whatever made him do that particular thing. He must appear to do certain things because he believes that these things are the wisest or most desirable for him to do or because he has a definite impulse to do them. And when he has a strong conviction, the audience likes to see him cling to it until some forceful or persuasive person or strong circumstance induces him to change it. It enjoys the expression of forceful will and intention and likes the hero who not only grins and bears his troubles, but promptly does something about them. A protagonist who has no controlling principles or rules, good or bad, for his actions will not hold interest for long.

Plausibility of character is very largely based on motivation. I remember a screen hero whose wife was unintentionally jostled by a stranger as she walked along a crowded street. He flew into an extraordinary and deadly rage that would have been quite unconvincing had he not, just before this incident, suddenly discovered that his wife had made a great sacrifice for his benefit. With this information it seemed perfectly natural to the audience that he should express his disgust at his own defects and his admiration for his wife by exploding when the stranger pushed her. In addition, the traits previously exhibited by this character had led the audience to expect quick reactions from him. A slower-witted man probably would not have reached the action point of his rage, if he developed any at all, until the careless stranger had disappeared. Of course, on the screen, most characters react more rapidly to situations than do people in actual life, but it should be remembered that violent physical action and much talking do not necessarily express character.

Action must agree with temperament. What appears to a coward to be an insoluble problem and so causes him deadly suffering, may seem no problem at all to a brave man. Yet, once an audience is convinced that the man is a coward, it will see his problem through a coward's eyes.

Characters may also be revealed, though as a rule less effectively, by the way in which the other characters treat them and speak of them. Showing the effect that an individual has on other people may indicate his idiosyncrasies very clearly. From admiration, envy and imitation, we learn something not only of those who display them but also something of the characters who rouse such feelings and acts. In one photoplay version of *Camille*, for instance, the heroine's character—her lack of reputation—was revealed by having the general's wife cattily parade the girl's lovers before her. (Incidentally, the general's wife in so doing revealed much about herself.)

Reputation is as much a part of personality as appearance. The audience usually will accept the hero or heroine at the estimate given by the other characters. The exception would be a plot based on misapprehension of character. Ordinarily, if the secondary characters express admiration for or fear of the protagonist, the audience will conclude that he warrants such response.

An interesting example of a contrary effect was the reaction of an audience to a bit of character portrayal in *A Star Is Born* (a picture notable not only for its financial success but for its writing and directing). The hero was depicted as being so lovable that his wife and his producer were willing to make extraordinary sacrifices for his benefit, yet other characters were given lines indicating their dislike for him and their lack of sympathy for his misfortunes. Apparently the audience was intended to believe that he deserved his tragic end, but as his actions were not sufficiently culpable to be convincing, the audience seemed to sympathize with him, preferring to take him at his wife's valuation rather than that of the other characters and to believe that his downfall was the result of an unkind fate rather than of his own acts.

A photoplay character, then, is given life and distinction through his appearance, his motives, his emotions, his actions and his attitude toward himself and others and toward circumstances. If he is drawn with sincerity and sympathy, he will have vitality and spirit. On the other hand, if the writer himself is bored with his hero or heroine, it is very likely that an audience will be also.

Like every form of art, the photoplay has developed certain conventions and techniques to meet its particular problems. Regarding the technique of presenting character, the first thing to remember is that *characterization in the film story is representative rather than photographic.*

Even when characters are based upon living persons, it is best to consider such persons as the artist does his model: as a basis, a suggestion to carry an idea, rather than something to be copied exactly. In the finished picture, the character must appear with the selected traits and idiosyncrasies more sharply outlined, more highly colored, than those of any ordinary living person; and because of this it is essential to select as a character model not an "average" person, but one *with special traits strongly exhibited.* He may be very simple, but he must be definite. Will Rogers was very successful in portraying what, to the casual observer, were very simple, ordinary, "true-to-life" characters, yet, as a matter of truth, not one was commonplace or usual. The more extraordinary the character, the more interesting he is, provided that he is humanly recognizable and understandable. He must not be so remote from ordinary human experience that the members of the audience cannot see themselves in his place. If he is too unusual, they lose all sympathy for him.

Shadowy and vague characters have no place in the photoplay—not even in a ghost story. The very attractive ghost in *The Ghost Goes West*, for example, had not only a definite individuality, but also a definite and strong desire.

Next, character must be thoroughly consistent; Shakespeare's murderers are never tender-hearted nor his heroes unheroic. Much criticism has been aimed at films that attempt to portray benevolent murderers and pure harlots and gentle-hearted crooks as being representative of human nature. It is possible there may exist in the universe such paradoxical moral combinations, but they no more represent mankind than does a white crow represent crows in general.

Modern literature, it is true, has discovered "so much bad in the best of us" and, perhaps less frequently, "so much good in the worst of us" that, in its endeavor to portray the psychology of motives and acts, it no longer recognizes the clearly defined theatrical hero or villain. And I believe that more and more the films will present definitely individual characterizations, even in musical comedies. But as yet photoplay audiences demand sharply defined characterization and will even welcome the old-fashioned "heavy," though they insist on a greater degree of motivation than was seen in earlier days.

What we mean by consistency becomes clearer when we consider that character always is revealed in a person's reaction to a situation that tends to block the attainment of a desire. One who has second-rate intelligence may seek to remove such an obstacle by brute force. The man with more intelligence will use his wits, his brains instead of his muscle, while a person with a weaker fiber may use threats, cheating or whining. The hero of a film story is barred from using the latter method because he would win the scorn rather than the admiration of an audience. Nor may he be satisfied with less than he sets out to achieve. The photoplay which attempts to picture him as being satisfied with some lesser achievement may win artistic but hardly popular success. The Pollyanna period has passed.

The extrovert hero will respond objectively to life, often in dramatic fashion, and will attack his problems immediately and directly. He likes people and rarely thinks deeply about anything. Occupationally, the writer should place him in the ranks of successful business men, politicians, organizers and leaders generally. Conflict serves him as a spur; opposition arouses him to discover his own powers and to make use of them. Under stress he puts forth his greatest effort.

The introvert prefers to avoid problems and conflicts. He lives by preference in the mental realm and detaches himself as much as possible from outward life. Naturally, all genius, literary, musical or artistic, is expressed through the introverts. Most persons, however, combine extrovert and introvert traits. Film story characters may be given distinction by tending sharply either toward introvertism or extrovertism.

Occasionally films of a high degree of excellence may err in this matter of consistency. Thus *Lost Horizon,* remarkable for its fine picturization of a most difficult story, had what appeared to be a momentary lapse of character consistency. The hero was presented as an English gentleman of education and culture, a diplomat, to say nothing of his having such understanding of ethical and spiritual values that he was selected to be the future head of Shangri-la, yet he rudely and most undiplomatically mimicked his gentle and elderly host when the latter supplied him with an excellent meal.

The Good Earth was outstanding in the exceptional consistency of its characterizations.

No action is too small or unimportant to receive attention on this score. Even the way an individual enters and leaves a scene can be in character, can be made interesting and revealing. The timid, the courageous, the active, the lazy, each will enter a room in different fashion. You may think that this is a matter for the actor or director, but your story will not reach the actor until it has been accepted in word form and the more clearly you can present the characters in your story, the more effectively will they present your story idea.

Additional emphasis may be given to character by simple little acts that fall logically within the plot. A kindness to an animal, or to a person in need, or a harsh word to a child, will lead sympathy toward or away from a character. But there is no need to bring out character through minor action having no plot effect. Once a character is clearly differentiated, the inclusion of characteristic little details that would naturally occur in connection with the plot may safely be left to the director.

Naturally, characterization must be in harmony with the period. The Puritans, the Abolitionists, England's "bright young people," "the flapper" and other types, all flourished in a particular era. However, if the time, period and place of your story are clearly identified, you can safely leave the costuming of your characters to the studio staff—unless the clothing has some definite effect on plot or character or for some other reason must be of a specific type or kind.

It may be said in passing that an author does well to be cautious in bestowing extraordinary abilities upon a character, remembering that they must be such as can be presented on the screen. The cameraman can do marvelous things; he can cause a character to disappear into thin air or to emerge therefrom; he can show him in two places simultaneously, but there still are limits to his abilities and to those of the actors.

A story with a strong central character usually is more effective than a story with several characters all of nearly the same importance. Even in a sentimental romance, one of the lovers is of more importance, dramatically speaking, than the other. No doubt as to which is the protagonist, nor as to his dominating characteristics, should be allowed in the minds of the audience. In actual life inconsistency in character is fairly common, but it has no place in the film story, especially in the central personage. He is best presented to the public *from his most characteristic angle and through his most characteristic actions*. Examine the photoplay characters that you most clearly remember and you will see that they all were marked by some *special* and *consistently expressed* trait that roused in you a strong liking or dislike. Yet, though his most important trait is clearly evident, the protagonist is more interesting, unless he appears in broad farce or comedy, if he is not markedly a "stage" type. The "typical" character is merely a puppet lacking life and individuality.

The dominating characteristics, of course, should be such as will arouse the especial emotional response desired. And the character whose actions are the result of reflection and decision is more interesting, as a rule, than one whose acts are purely the result of impulse. Man, in reality, may be a complex bundle of impulses, attitudes and habits, but he cannot be pictured in any such fashion in the time allowed him on the screen. There, he must be given coherence and significance in habit and action. A study of impressive and lasting fictional characters shows the distinction achieved by such limitation, even in the novel, which offers more scope for detailed characterization than does the screen. What we recall of Dostoevski's characters, for example, is that most of them were mentally abnormal. George Eliot's, on the other hand, are recalled as being exceptionally noble and gifted with extraordinary reasoning powers. Bitterness is inherent in Balzac's characterizations. Dickens used each character to express some particular human eccentricity.

It is impossible to give an entire description of a character in a film story. It is a waste of time to attempt it because, as a matter of truth, the suppression of nearly all traits except the dominant ones will make a character more credible than if he were completely described. The stressing of one or two traits strengthens rather than lessens the definite individuality.

One of the things that made Captain Bligh in *Mutiny on the Bounty* an unforgettable character was the way in which his chief qualities—cruelty and hardness—were stressed even to the point of having him order the continued flogging of a man who had died under the lash.

The character who has no dominating trait or traits offers nothing of dramatic value. "One virtue, vice or passion ought to be shown in every man as predominating over all the rest." It is quite possible in real life that we do not always recognize people by their dominant characteristics, but it seems to be essential for the film writer to make his characters recognizable in this way. A novelist who has won great popular success is said, when writing the first draft of a novel, to give each character the name of the emotion he is expected to depict, such as Greed, Love, Jealousy, Peace. I think that the drama of many a film story would be strengthened if its author would keep in mind, while building it, the dominant emotion that is responsible for each plot actor's reaction to events. Of course, you never *tell* your audience what emotion clutches your character. Let it *see* him in the throes of that emotion. It will not do to say that John Brown is obstinate. He must *do* something obstinately. If some explanation of a character must be given, let some other character do it.

The whole character, all that he is and does, must be seen in relation to the particular trait that is to be expressed. Nor does this mean that the character is entirely uncomplicated. The dominant emotion may be *modified* by a secondary emotion. Ambition may be modified by love, love by fear, kindness by gluttony, fear by cowardice, bravery by greed. A story may be based on the struggle between two emotions to dominate a character—though this is a better subject for a novel than for a film story.

The photoplay is not, as yet, the medium for expressing completely rounded character. Charles Laughton in *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* is remembered as the cruel and jealous father because his role concentrated on these traits. His part did not call for a well-rounded picture of Mr. Barrett, who may very well have been a good business man, of fastidious tastes, a connoisseur in various lines. The strength of the role was due to the suppression of all attributes except jealousy and cruelty.

Another reason for limiting character to certain consistent traits is the necessity, as we have already seen, for presenting each character as a very *definite personality*. Only the highlights can be shown, the particular things which make that personality distinctive and which affect the plot. Another device by which the principal characters may gain the greater share of attention is to make them more original than the secondary characters. When the latter are types the spectators recognize them quickly and then turn their attention to those characters who are less familiar.

Invariably the most successful heroes and heroines are those who quickly gain and hold the sympathy of their audiences, and they must gain it before their "big scene." Not for the protagonists are the extremes of unpleasant emotion. The villain may be as unpleasant as you can make him, for the audience is always prepared to dislike the opposing character, but it does want to like its hero and heroine. Generally it prefers people it would like to know in real life, and a very few that it would like to slap. If your principal character, through necessity induced by history or biography, is one that the audience is not likely to approve, let him at least have some trait that arouses admiration. As the old lady observed of the notorious murderer, "At least he was good to his mother."

The movie audience likes its heroes and heroines to have "hearts of gold." It wants them to have lovable qualities. This does not mean that they are to be saintly or mawkishly good. They should be far too human to be perfect but, bad or good, they should be likable; and they may have greater appeal if they have moments when they are less than wise or forceful. A character with charm and some of the natural failings of mankind will get more sympathetic attention than a character more nearly perfect ethically but with less charm. If he convincingly gets into trouble through his good-nature or unselfishness, and gets out of it through his own resolution and courage, he will win the audience's enthusiastic approval. The "homely" type of character is generally successful, but must be worthy of interest.

The synthetic movie audience demands that a rascal shall be punished and that a villain shall lose in the end; it firmly believes that "whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." Of course, if the villain changes his ways, is reformed for sufficient reason, he becomes admirable. But no pity is wasted on a scoundrel, at least not by photoplay audiences, and the characters whose actions arouse disapproval must be made to realize the error of their ways. The comment, "Ain't he grand! But he'll get his yet!" overheard at a photoplay that pictured the nefarious exploits of a gangster, perfectly expresses what the audience expects concerning the wrongdoer, no matter how thrilling he or she may be. Deep rooted in the human mind there appears to be some idea that in the "Magdalene" plot, the erring heroine may be forgiven, but her conduct must not be set up as approved.

Other things being equal, the audience prefers the heroes and heroines to have some trace of conscience. The great and powerful "middle class" prefers to give its approval to what it considers "good" rather than to the questionable.

If reformers would study the reactions of movie audiences, they might be encouraged by their insistence on certain ethical standards and their belief in *Right* and *Wrong*. Even in the gangster pictures which were so prevalent for a time, although the gangster held their interest and even roused their admiration, they wanted him punished for doing wrong. The things which the average men and women of our allegedly civilized nation have been taught for generations to consider as wrong must still, as far as the film story is concerned, be bereft of reward. It is important that the writer realize this fact, for the reason that a spectator will not become immersed, will not "lose himself" in a photoplay if it runs counter to his prejudices or convictions, nor will he respond with any degree of warmth to one that scoffs at an ideal he cherishes.

Audiences also have marked reactions to names. It is advisable to give characters names which are not difficult to pronounce or to remember and which do not form awkward combinations. Again, audiences seem to assume that certain names presuppose certain characteristics. "Percy," for example, seems unsuited for either a pugilist or a court judge. "Martha" suits a practical woman and "Worthington" a serious man. "Suzanne" probably is frivolous and "Bob" a good fellow.

It will aid in expressing character to use names that long have been recognized as attached to certain periods, regions, races, nationalities, classes and periods. The writer of a story laid in American Colonial times needs only to scan the pages of New England history to find suggestions for names appropriate to that period, or for a story depicting the old West, in the history of the pioneers. Names indicating characters of foreign birth or descent can be invented easily by anyone who will take the trouble to glance through the native literature of the country involved. It may be taken for granted, as a rule, that René, Hyacinth, Pierre and Antoine are of French extraction and that Heinrich, Wilhelm or Fritz are German. MacGregor may well fit a character with a shrewd instinct for thrift. Moses, Francis Xavier, Luther and Calvin suggest divergent religious backgrounds. Owing largely to the circumstances of immigration in America, Lowell and Emerson may suggest a more cultured background than do O'Hennessy and Murphy. From the same influence comes the suggestion that Bridget, once the name of royalty, is a housemaid.

As many plot actors may be used as are necessary to carry out the plot and to prove the theme. In addition to the principal and secondary characters, a story requires minor characters who act as foils or who are necessitated by plot situations. For example, the heroine, traveling with a coach and four, stops at an inn. The inn, but not the innkeeper, is essential to the plot. Yet an inn normally has an innkeeper. Here is a minor character; and as long as he has made his way into the story and is fulfilling his purpose (to make the inn scene more realistic) it will be worth while to make him highly individual and interesting and, if the plot permits, amusing. A character with a pleasantly expressed sense of humor is an addition to almost any story. But this must be conveyed with a few touches. No minor character should be as conspicuous as the principals nor win attention from them. Give him only his moment, but for that moment let him be interesting.

A minor character may also be introduced to provide motivation. An elderly relative, or a child, may find a normal place in a group of characters, and because of affection for one or the other some character may do or refuse to do something he could not plausibly otherwise have done or refused to do. But no matter how interesting a secondary or minor character may be, he has no place in the story until his relations to the other characters and the plot action make his presence logical. In a photoplay version of *Rose of the Rancho*, the line of interest was badly split because a comedy character, interesting in himself but with no obvious relation to the other characters was allowed, when the action was well under way, to enter the story without apparent reason. Such a character, if properly brought in, may be a refreshing contrast to the principals, but he should have some definite connection with them.

Characterization affecting the plot cannot be left to the actor or the director. They will try to depict the character called for by the story, but the story must indicate clearly what is to be depicted. Some stars, in whatever role they are cast, will play the same character unless the story very definitely calls for something else. It is not advisable for the free lance writer to build his story on the characteristics of some particular star; he should not, deliberately, create "a good type for Gable," or anyone else.

In conclusion: *it is helpful to know a great deal more about your characters than appears in the story. You cannot give the illusion of life to a character whom you yourself do not know thoroughly.*

III. PLOT

All life operates through a mechanism, and the higher the form of life the more complex, sure and flexible the mechanism. This fact alone should save us from opposing life and mechanism thereby reducing the latter to unintelligent automatism and the former to an aimless splurge. . . . Mechanism is indispensable. . . . Nevertheless the difference between the artist and the mere technician is unmistakable.

—JOHN DEWEY, "HUMAN NATURE AND CONDUCT"

A STORY idea and a plot are different things. The idea is the nucleus of the plot, but do not expect it to be the plot any more than you expect a mass of clay to show the figure that may be modeled from it. It is the writer's work to manipulate the story idea into a plot: to build up complication, crisis and climax, to develop an effective characterization of the personalities concerned in it; and the effectiveness of the plot must be apparent, not on the screen, but in the manuscript form in which it is read by the studio editor. There are many definitions that contribute to an understanding of what a plot is, but it is unlikely that it will pay you to attempt a career as a film writer unless you possess plot sense; unless you have sufficient richness of imagination and feeling for drama not only to recognize but to be able to invent plot situations. Dramatic instinct is more essential than education and, given some feeling for drama, you can develop it; you can learn to think theatrically. Like everything else, the actual building of plots becomes easier through practice.

Plot is the design, pattern or outline of the story action; it is a statement of the problems or obstacles that confront certain specific characters, their reaction to those problems or obstacles, and the result. It is a series of events or situations affected by the characters involved and affecting them, with the situations building up to a climax. It is a string of relevant and dramatic situations, preferably rising out of character and affecting it, and woven together in such sequence and ascending strength as to make an interesting story.

A plot must have a definite beginning and ending. Plot structure, says Walter Pater, "is that architectural conception of work, which foresees the end in the beginning and never loses sight of it, and in every part is conscious of all the rest, till the last sentence does but, with undiminished vigor, unfold and justify the first."

Before going on, I wish to explain that I find it effective to consider the film story from a different viewpoint than that used in connection with other forms of fiction. You are preparing the story for *visual* presentation, and it is necessary to visualize your material as it will appear on the screen; to think of it objectively. It is not enough to be able to write down what your plot actors are doing; you must mentally *see* them doing it, until you become instinctively picture-minded, and I am impelled to warn you that it takes either a vivid imagination or considerable practice to be able to visualize a scene as it would appear if acted. Unless you have in your mind a clear vision of each situation, you will not be able to construct the vivid word pictures that are essential to make others see your story. Undoubtedly, many a story that has possibilities for a popular photoplay inherent in its plot is rejected because it did not offer the studio reader clear enough pictures so that he might visualize the scenes. Therefore, think of *building* your story into scenes rather than of writing it; of picturing your actors in certain places and situations. Although you must first present the story in words, it eventually will be *seen,* not read; and whatever is in it that cannot be expressed on the screen is useless. The story, then, is *constructed* or *pictured;* its divisions are *scenes* or *sequences,* not *paragraphs* or *chapters;* it is not told, but *dramatized,* and it reaches the mind of the audience very largely through the medium of *action.* All the plot situations must be planned from the viewpoint of sight and sound, and they must be written largely in words and phrases indicating action.

An excellent rule for the beginner is: *Never tell an audience anything of importance that you can show.* A stage play may inform the audience through the medium of a maid who dusts while telling the butler what he already must know, e.g., that the young master is in a jam because he married the wrong girl; but the photoplay audience wants to *see* the young man wooing and marrying the girl. It wants to be an eye witness of everything that is important to the story.

In speaking of visual presentation, I do not mean pantomime. As far as the film story is concerned, pantomime is a specific method of conveying information to the audience. Visual presentation shows the audience the actual event. Naturally enough, an audience is more likely to believe what it sees with its own eyes rather than what is merely reported to it.

Perhaps the simplest formula for a plot is: *invent some colorful personalities, involve them in an apparently hopeless complication or predicament, then extricate them in a logical and dramatic way that brings them happiness.* Or, let circumstances drive an interesting character to a point where he begins to fight strenuously for something he wants, confront him with trying obstacles and then, after he has overcome them all, let him achieve his desires.

In order that a plot may have enough material for a photoplay, it requires a secondary line of plot action that crosses and interweaves with the main line of action in a way to give greater color and depth to the story. This additional line may relate to minor characters or it may be a secondary story concerning the lead. Episodes of the second plot line are often introduced into the written film story by such connectives as *meanwhile*, *in the meantime*, *during the period*, *while John was away*, and so on. These two parallel lines of action running through the plot not only add interest and variety, but allow the actors to be taken off the set when time lapses are necessary. The next time you see a picture notice the cross-weaving of the two lines of action.

A simple example is that seen in the impressive *Man of Aran* when the audience's attention is centered on the struggle of the men in the boat on the angry sea and flashed back occasionally to the anxious woman and child working on the shore and watching the struggle.

This does not mean that you may tell one story and merely hitch it to another concerning the same characters. The photoplay structure requires that the plot lines be integrated to produce one impression.

Like that of the short story, the film plot may arise from character traits, from an event, or from some specific set of circumstances, or even from a title, but it must have more situations, more events and more action than the usual magazine story. Although a stage play or a short story may center round one simple situation, and although a musical comedy may achieve success with only sufficient complication to give excuse for the setting and the particular combination of characters concerned, the film story depends largely on the strength and variety of its plot complication. In building a plot from an episode or situation, work backward and forward from the situation; that is, consider what might logically have preceded the given situation and to what it might lead until the material develops the related beginning, end and middle that are essential to plot. Working back and forth from situations is excellent practice to develop the inventive faculty.

Its emotional content is the most important thing in a plot. By this is meant not only the emotion that the particular situations cause the actors to express, but even more especially, the particular emotion that the plot is designed to produce on the audience. The understanding of emotion, its cause and effects, is so important to the writer of film stories that it is treated in a separate chapter.

Certain plot patterns long since have won public favor and with fresh treatment doubtless will continue to do so. Among these is *the rise to success plot* centering on man's search for the satisfactions of accomplishment. It is found in one version in the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk* and probably appeared long before that. In modern times, the giant may be a rival business man, a falling market, a soulless corporation, or it may be poverty; but in any version of this plot an appealing underdog comes out on top. Its feminine version is the Cinderella plot centering on the poor girl who, after many heart-breaking situations, wins her prince; but whereas the success plot requires the male protagonist to fight strenuously to achieve his success, Cinderella usually rouses the desire of her prince through her beauty and goodness. This plot has brought more motion picture actresses to fame than any other. The audience knows it so well that its sympathy is with Cinderella from beginning to end. Her success, in spite of lowly origin, or pitiful circumstances, or other handicap, always suggests gratifying possibilities to almost every woman who watches her. If done with an appealing heroine, fresh and modern treatment, and a fair degree of reality, it never fails. It can be done with great dignity and charm. *A Kiss for Cinderella, Peg o' My Heart, She Married Her Boss,* and *Small Town Girl* are examples of this plot.

Almost as popular is *the prodigal son plot* involving a youth of either sex who leaves home and sweetheart in high anticipation of an easier and gayer life which, as a matter of fact, turns out to be not only gay, but ruinous. The youth eventually comes to his senses and gladly returns to his home and his first love.

The sacrifice plot, based on one of the commonest ideals, always is well worth considering, although it must be given careful treatment, since its popularity has been dimmed by photoplays of too sentimental a character and by those in which the sacrifice obviously was not worth while. It may depict the sacrifice made by a father, mother, sister, brother, sweetheart or friend. While the sacrifice must achieve its purpose, the person making it must not reap any personal benefit until the last sequence in order that the purity of motive may be kept untarnished as far as is consistent with the more or less essential happy ending. A variant of this plot centers around the valiant spouse who because of an erring husband or wife is left to do all for their children. A popular example is *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch.*

The love plot is a universal favorite understood by all races. It depicts a fundamental emotion that may be used as cause or effect and it offers the film story writer an innumerable number of aspects or angles. It is in perpetual demand at nearly all studios. The love displayed need not concern persons of different sex nor need it be sexual love; it may be a mother's love for her child, as in *Stella Dallas,* or a woman's love for a waif, as in *Min and Bill.* It may be love between father and son, such as was shown in *Sorrel and Son;* it may be the love of brothers as in *Beau Geste* or the love of a child for a man who helped him as in *Captains Courageous.* And, of course, there is the romantic love story, the sweetheart story, with or without a strong element of sex. It can be passionate without being offensive; a really great love may be expressed from several angles and in many ways. Suggestion is better than too much realism; it allows the audience to use its own imagination which it always is eager to do.

The dramatic triangle, the love affairs of one man and two women, or two men and one woman, if done with any degree of originality, is generally acceptable. Triangle stories include *Design for Living, Wife vs. Secretary, These Three,* and *Dark Angel.*

Much less frequently appears the story of romance so remote in time and place that it becomes unusual, fantastic, or weird. Among these are *Berkeley Square* and *Outward Bound.*

There is also *the plot that is didactic* from an idealistic viewpoint. The author frankly undertakes to depict life, not as most persons experience it, but in an idealized version as he thinks it should be. It is true that a touch of idealism widens the appeal of almost any film story. Once you have caught the attention of the audience they will seize upon an idealistic suggestion; they will carry it out imaginatively and sometimes get the idea more clearly than if you worked it out in boring detail.

Domestic relations, with their loves, apprehensions, struggles, anxieties and joys, offer a plot pattern that has tremendous interest to women. *Dodsworth* offers an outstanding example. Women's interest in the problems of married life accounts for much of Ann Harding's success. These plots often skirt immorality, bleached a bit by the insistence that the heroine's motives are pure. They threaten a sex problem rather than portray it.

Plots concerning a long-planned vengeance that is at last abandoned because of love, or a family feud that forms a barrier between lovers, or those in which a fine character is made to suffer unjustly, are as old as the hills, but continue to offer the writer an excellent framework for modern stories.

Plots based on likeness of identity, on mistaken identity, or on the assumption of another's identity have been common. Pirandello made very original use of such a plot in *As You Desire Me.*

Reformation of character offers a strong plot pattern. Provided there is sufficient motivation, audiences seem to enjoy seeing a careless man led into a situation that rouses his latent ambition; or the supposedly "hard guy" softened by something that develops "his better self"; or the hardening of an underdog's courage and spirit until he gains strength to fight his way to the top. When plot is based on change in an individual character, the changing ought to be consistent and for sufficient reason. The crook may settle down and lead a blameless life, the flighty frivolous woman may become sedate and conscientious; but it requires some powerful force to make them do it. Camille's sacrifice of her own happiness makes a powerful story and is plausible because of the sincerity of her love—a love that actually changes her character; but sudden reformation without sufficient and strong motivation annoys an audience. They feel that the author is not keeping to the rules of the game. Of course, the reformation must be depicted from one angle only. It is impossible in ninety minutes to picture the complete regeneration of a human being. The reformation motive was developed in *Magnificent Obsession*, *Fury* and *Green Light.*

Revelation of character offers the plot pattern dealing with the bully who eventually appears as the coward he really is; or the meek man who is led to do an heroic act, or the human worm who eventually turns in rousing fashion; but, of course, there must be some convincing reason for the revelation of the latent characteristic. This pattern lends itself to comedy, but is not so easy to present convincingly in serious drama because it must be done without sentiment or preaching.

Another plot pattern along the same lines concerns the criminal who becomes involved in circumstances that force him to decide whether he will continue in crime or perform some great and good deed, the necessity for which confronts him. Usually he does his great and good deed at the cost of his life and thus more than pays for his crimes. The feminine variant of this is the "Magdalene" plot in which the penitent's sacrifice, based on love, atones for her previous immorality and so enables her to return to a better way of living or brings her to a more or less peaceful death.

The relation to society of an unconventional woman, or an idealist, or a radical, or a criminal may offer opportunity for a dramatic conflict, provided that the personality depicted is strong and appealing.

The adventure plot, the picaresque story, besides depicting the protagonist's exploits in dangerous circumstances, usually requires that he rescue a beautiful girl or else that the once poverty-stricken or otherwise apparently ineffective hero shall return with the riches necessary to gain his sweetheart. It is generally very melodramatic, with a glamorous heroine, and a hero and villain theatrically presented. *Tiger Rose* is an example of a successful story based on this plot. Whenever it is well done with strong romantic interest, it will find a market. There is practically no market for the "Western story," the cowboy story, since these usually are written by the studio staff.

The plot involving the detection of a criminal has the advantage of allowing sequels and the building up of a star part, as in Earl Derr Biggers' *Charlie Chan* played by Warner Oland, and in Stuart Palmer's series in which Edna May Oliver played Hildegard Withers, the school teacher detective, and Jimmie Gleason, the role of Inspector Piper. Incidentally, the detective story, being concerned with direct action, rarely runs foul of the censor. Its love interest is secondary and generally sex interest is entirely absent.

Less seldom than in the past there is a market for the "horror" story such as *Dracula*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *King Kong*, and very rarely for those dealing with human abnormality as in *Freaks*, or *The Unholy Three.*

Topical or timely plots are based on whatever the newspapers are playing up, such as any event involving a colorful personality, or any problem affecting a large number of persons. If presented in melodramatic form such stories are easily salable, but they must avoid the appearance of being propaganda and must be written and sold quickly enough to be timely when they are produced. The inclusion of any event, location or character that marks a story as being extremely up to date will help to sell it, and so will the inclusion of anything that offers the producer an opportunity for publicity or advertising from a new and interesting angle.

Stories of fantasy are difficult to write and occasionally almost impossible to present on the screen. Barrie's *Peter Pan* is one of the very few outstanding successes.

A musical comedy plot is merely a thread on which are strung the song and dance routines, the ensembles and the spectacular features. It is a compilation rather than a story and the necessity for its close adaptation to the particular type of comedy played by the principal actors in it makes it impossible for anyone but writers at the studios to develop it. The picture, *A Night at the Opera*, starring the Marx Brothers, offers an example of the development of a musical comedy. First, it was built up by half a dozen scenarists. Before it was screened, a cast presented the principal sequences "on the road," that is, in the theaters in smaller towns, for six months, during which period the audiences' reactions to each scene were carefully checked. The story was then rewritten to include the greatest amount of material favored by the public, the necessary scenes re-filmed, and the picture brought to its final successful form.

The comedy form that is open to the free-lance writer is that sometimes called the "human interest comedy." It has been well presented in *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, *My Man Godfrey*, *The Thin Man*, *It Happened One Night*, *Love on the Run*, and *Theodora Goes Wild.*

Plots involving historical characters are usually adaptations of biographies and are discussed in the chapter under that heading.

Plots based on the activities of criminals and presented from their viewpoint are less popular now than they were a few years ago. More and more do they need careful handling to enable them to pass the various censorship groups.

Many studios will not use *plots dealing with religion*, no matter what the angle, in spite of the fact that a few such plots have made successful photoplays, for example, *The Magnificent Obsession* and *The Miracle Man* which were done with effective sincerity. The *King of Kings* and *Ben Hur* included very spectacular effects and won great popular approval. *The Green Pastures*, concerning the Negro's idea of heaven, which was presented in a manner quite acceptable to American church groups, was banned, for a time at least, in both England and Canada. The famous *Abie's Irish Rose* which ran in stage form on Broadway for years and which concerned the romance of a daughter of a Roman Catholic Irishman and the son of an orthodox Jew, concentrated largely on the differences of nationality rather than on religious ones.

Plots involving race conflict must be skilfully handled. Successful examples include *The Birth of a Nation*, *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, *Sanders of the River*, *Charge of the Light Brigade*, and *Never the Twain Shall Meet.*

Plots that are too strongly anti-labor or anti-capital are very likely to offend some large section of the great moving-picture audience and, therefore, will not be purchased by the studios. Nor is a photoplay that deals with poverty from end to end anything that the usual movie-goer will pay to see. For years no producer would touch a full-length film of child life; then one took a gamble on Shirley Temple, and she became tops at the box office. Free love, whatever that is, trial marriage, birth control and other controversial subjects had better be avoided as yet by the writer who hopes for commercial success.

The importance of their European, oriental and other foreign markets makes it highly inadvisable for the studios to release pictures that show warfare, national crisis or struggle, or present any important group in an unfavorable light. For example, consider the situation affecting *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. For some time I have been greatly interested in the dramatic possibilities, for the screen, inherent in this book by Franz Werfel. It tells the moving story of the five thousand Armenian men and women who encamped on Musa Dagh and for forty days resisted all attacks of the mighty Enver Pasha, the Turkish war-lord, who had ordered them into exile. Told in the effective prose of Werfel, the story rouses sympathy for the Armenians and resentment against the Turks. Not until I spent some time in Turkey did I realize how impossible it would be to present this bit of history on the screen in a fashion that would not be tremendously resented by the Turks and by other national groups. Though a masterpiece of dramatic writing, it is unlikely that any film company will risk its Near East markets by making it into a picture.

The particular social stratum that admires the morbid, the neurotic or the highly abnormal, does not appear to make much impression on the box-office and, until it does, the film story writer should avoid plots with such slants. Other plots to be discarded are those involving very high-brow problems, those that require a very great deal of dialogue, those that include propaganda of any description and, as a rule, those that constitute an indictment of some existing social condition.

There have been successful film stories without love interest, notable examples being *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, and the extremely effective *Captains Courageous*, but whether it be merely romantic sentiment or intense passion, the writer is best advised to introduce some love scenes.

American movie-goers prefer to spend their money to see photoplays made from plots with pretty girls; handsome men; witty, homely or picturesque characters of either sex; fashionable clothes; nice homes; "places you would go if you were rich"; fights and, in spite of their frequent use, chases of all kinds; thrilling danger and touching love scenes. They prefer the more attractive to the ugly side of life. Women, and do not forget that the majority of movie-goers are women, like to see well-furnished interiors and modes of life among cultured people of more means than their own. Drabness, unless it can be made dramatic, is no more interesting in a picture than it is in real life and the twin of drabness is dullness. In times of national prosperity and ease, audiences apparently liked a picture that gave them "a good cry." In times of depression, they do not mind wiping their eyes now and then, but they have no wish for the very sad play. Deathbed scenes are not as popular as they were years ago. Times have been too hard; tragedy has come too close.

The audience sees itself in the part played by the characters it likes, and vicariously it reaps the rewards they gain. Scenes of passionate love intrigue the young and inexperienced; the poor temporarily enjoy the luxuries of the rich; and the meekest stay-at-home enjoys thrilling adventure. But this, while true, does not mean that they always are satisfied with mediocrity.

The amateur is frequently told that originality of plot is essential if his story is to reach the motion picture producer. This statement requires further explanation and an understanding of what constitutes originality. Edgar Allan Poe's analysis of originality in his *Literary Criticism* may make this clearer:

> Now the authorial originality, properly considered, is threefold. There is, first, the originality of the general thesis; secondly, that of several incidents of thoughts, by which the thesis is developed; and, thirdly, that of the manner or tone by which means alone an old subject, even when developed through hackneyed incidents or thoughts, may be made to produce a fully original effect—which, after all, is the end truly in view. But originality, as it is one of the highest, is also one of the rarest of merits. . . . We are content perforce, therefore, as a general thing, with either of the lower branches of originality mentioned above, and would regard with high favor indeed, any author who should supply the great desideratum in combining the three.

My own experience leads me to believe that an original plot is never as essential or, in fact, as salable as is fresh and original treatment of a plot that has proved popular. As a matter of fact, film stories are rejected for poor structure and undesirable subject-matter far more frequently than for lack of originality.

It is novelty in *treatment,* freshness in characterization, new situations and reactions, that the producers are seeking. The problems of life in general are old, but mankind eternally finds new solutions for many of them, and the basic plots—thirty-six, according to Georges Polti—can be given an unlimited number of treatments. I doubt that there really are as many absolutely distinct plots as thirty-six, but in any event there are sufficient to provide an infinite number of new and fresh stories, and plot designs may be interwoven in innumerable ways to produce new effects.

It is true that many members of the photoplay audience of today are so "plot wise" that, given the slightest clue, they can recognize the plot pattern; but in spite of this they welcome the familiar design, provided that the story developed from it is fresh and new. If the plot pattern has met with repeated success, it is likely to succeed again if you give it a new dress and complexion; that is, new twists, new effects and different characterization. The situations need not be new, but they must be pictured from a new angle and developed in a new way; e. g., a conflict may result in a violent quarrel between father and son or husband and wife; such a scene *per se* is nothing new, but the reactions of the characters may be made novel and different. Whatever is unusual, if probable, will add interest value to a plot and the unusualness may be manifested as situations, or setting, or character. In *It Happened One Night,* it was the novel location—a transcontinental bus and a tourist camp, plus numerous appealing and amusing "bits of business" that carried a very light plot to success.

Give the audience something different from what it expected in the way of plot twist and you are doing it a favor, but do not try to be too original. It is improbable that you can invent a plot design that is entirely new, and even if you could it is doubtful if any of the studios would take the chance involved in producing it.

A successful photoplay frequently brings a host of generally poor imitations in its train. Thus we get cycles of gangster, pioneer, historical or other films, until the public tires of them or some producer has the courage to produce something different. But it should be noted also that the producer who wants to repeat a success will refuse a story that is too much like the first. It is the *type* he wants to repeat, not the *content.*

When you have decided what plot design will offer the best basis for your story material, keep to the pattern to the end of the story. The plot should not start out as light comedy and drop into tragedy, or start with the poor-girl—rich-boy motive and end up with a mother's sacrifice. If you have a good situation that cannot be worked relevantly into the plot pattern you have selected, do not try to force it in. Set it aside for another story. The discriminating selection of material is of the utmost importance in film-story building. You need to select or invent situations that will give continuing and constantly changing action. You must have at least one situation that is important and highly exciting and that develops out of some crisis in the life of your principal plot actor.

Do not be in too much of a hurry to get your plot on paper. Time spent in inventing, selecting and arranging material is well spent. Muddled thinking rather than bad writing is responsible for the failure of many a story. Once you are certain of the lines of characterization, action and motivation, the detail will take care of itself. Your notes may be jotted down perhaps, but let the plot itself ripen in your mind until it is full grown. When you have it completely in mind, you may find it helpful to make a synopsis or skeleton of the plot action in chronological sequence, but there is no point in trying to put your story on paper at all until you have at least one principal character and the supplementary characters in a certain place, in a certain situation, at a certain time, and all involving or about to be involved in a specific conflict. If you are not sure what you are going to write, you will write with difficulty.

As a rule, you can start your plot with the situation that precipitates the complication and that brings the important plot actors in contact. You may picture some happening that directly affects your protagonist and causes him to do or not to do something in a manner that immediately arrays the opposing forces of the plot against each other and causes conflict and further complication. Some thing, some person or circumstances must attempt to force the protagonist to do something he does not want to do or prevent him from doing something he does want to do. Bring the lead in at a moment when he can perform some characteristic act and keep him on long enough so that the audience gets to know him and is able to recognize him in the scenes that follow.

Jump into the action as quickly as possible. No introduction, no leisurely approach is needed. Begin the plot as far on as is consistent with the necessity of building it up to a climax. The writer of a play intended for presentation on the stage must begin his story well on toward the middle and merely tell or suggest previous happenings of which the audience should be informed. The writer of a film story may begin his story as he pleases, *provided* that what he shows is a logical and essential part of his plot. There is, however, no advantage in picturing the childhood of a character unless his childhood and its environment essentially affect the plot action. If your most thrilling situation appears to belong near the beginning of your plot outline, it is clear that you are not beginning your story in the right place. Unless you can supply an even more thrilling situation for the climax, you will have to begin the plot with earlier situations. In any case, the opening of the story must be sufficiently arresting to catch the story editor's attention. If it arouses his curiosity, he will continue to read it.

After you have outlined your plot you may discover that it is deficient in action and drama; that is, there are not enough important happenings in it. It needs sufficient action to run in photoplay form for at least ninety minutes, and preferably more, in order that a motion picture director may have material with which to work, and above all there must be sufficient drama to arouse a definite response in an audience.

With these needs in mind, you weave in more material, you build up the situations and characters so that they develop more intense conflict. You thrust your plot actors into additional circumstances that compel them to do something significant and thus reveal more about themselves. Occasionally a romance or feud or scheme between two minor characters will help to build up a plot, but their affairs must be influenced by or must influence the main plot line.

In the film-story plot, a situation is a temporary and particular state or relation of the affairs of some person or persons under specific conditions or circumstances. Situations must be theatric; they must be effective when acted. In them, characters must constantly be doing something. It is the writer's job to picture each situation as dramatically as possible, and almost every original situation offers some element of the dramatic that can be more fully expressed. Perhaps the most important part of the writer's practice is his effort to see and bring out the dramatic possibilities in the situations offered by his story material.

Plot strength is developed by strengthening the desires of the plot actors, by blocking these desires, by making their problems more difficult of solution; by emphasizing the things that cause these actors to act as they do, and sometimes by repeating, in additional situations, the type of conflict first depicted. Let the tenseness of the situations grow stronger until the crash of the climax.

Strong desires must be directly opposed. The protagonist must be torn between his own loyalties, or between his own desire and the pressure of some opposing force, human or otherwise, or there will be little or no drama; nothing to arouse feeling in the audience. He must be forced into a corner where he must make some important decision, a decision that twists the plot and is in keeping with his own character.

Neither the protagonist nor the force that he fights should be weak, shallow or uninteresting. The futile meanderings of a weak, shallow person may provide material for a novel, but they have little place in the photoplay. A character may be deceptively simple; e.g., his chief trait may appear to be laziness. But it takes considerable strength of will to remain lazy in a world where so many factors tend to discourage laziness. Give the principal actor a strong and subtle antagonist, be it man or some force of nature. Make it one that will strive mightily to prevent him from obtaining that for which he is fighting.

Let there be no doubt as to the relative importance of your characters. The sympathy of the audience must be directed definitely toward a certain one, who must be introduced before the complication or conflict develops, and who must be given a chance, at least, to be master of his fate.

In this connection the writer must distinguish between complication and conflict. Complication in the story refers to plot twists that interweave characters and circumstances in a way to create new situations. The complication brings conflicting elements to the point of action.

If the complexity is not sufficiently important; if the problem expressed by the complication is too easily solvable, the plot will have neither the length nor the drama required for the film story. It should be important and interesting enough to provide a clash of conflicting desires that will carry the story to a climax and a dénouement. All the way through the film story it should be clear what it is that opposes the lead, whatever it is that he has to fight, whether it be poverty, disease, a faithless sweetheart, a rival, physical danger or a nagging wife.

Perhaps the most popular type of conflict is that between human beings; the conflict in which a man struggles against one or more of his own kind. This conflict, with its basis in human desires and passions, is found in business, in society, in the family, in school, in all the walks of everyday life.

It requires two or more characters to create a situation with any degree of dramatic effect. One person alone in a scene may show emotion, but it is unlikely that the effect will be dramatic. It takes two to produce a conflict just as it takes two to make a quarrel.

Another type of conflict is that between man and the forces of nature. In this he battles not only against his fellow men but against storm, cold, heat, darkness, sea, mountain height, barren soil, savage animals, or against time. This type of conflict lends itself to melodrama and is the basis of the adventure story and stories in which, for example, the hero must reach a certain place by a certain time, or accomplish something by a certain time to save his honor or to save someone he loves. Often stories based on this type of conflict have so much physical action and so little characterization and dialogue that they approach pure melodrama, but on the other hand they can be done with great beauty and distinction as, for instance, in the international prize-winning photoplay *Man of Aran* in which the struggle is between man and a relentless sea.

A third type of conflict is that between a person's own desires and fears; or between his impulses and his principles. Really great literature always has dealt largely with the action of the soul. As depicted in its extreme form, this kind of conflict expresses practically no visible bodily action, inasmuch as everything that happens, happens within the individual's mind. This may be even more vital and intense than physical action, but inasmuch as the camera has not yet developed to a point where it can record thought processes detached from physical action, this type of conflict is of little value to the writer of film stories. As a matter of truth, in real life, there is no such separation of thought and physical action. Whatever fills a man's mind will impel some corresponding activity, even if it be only an involuntary muscular response. The writer will have no great difficulty in revealing any essential mental struggle by appropriate external action and speech. The too psychological film story usually fails because it is overloaded with mental activity and verbal expression and fails to express corresponding physical action.

Many of the successful photoplays will be found to combine one or more types of conflict. The hero may struggle against man, nature and his own base desires, but the plot will stress one above the others. In any event, the conflict must be fundamental and it is most effective when it represents a struggle that is common to many persons.

Complication and conflict must lead to a crisis in the affairs of the characters concerned in the film-story plot. The crisis makes plain what consequences, usually unpleasant, may result. Many amateurs make the mistake of leaping from an action or event directly to the crisis it causes, without showing between these the *effect* of the stimulating action or event. It should be remembered that the action or event itself rarely produces the crisis. Generally this is produced by the plot actors' *reaction* to the causative action or event. The crisis is the turning point, the psychological moment; the conflict is the actual battle or contest. The crisis is a specific situation that forces the character into making some decision.

Nor should the crisis be confused with the climax. There may be more than one crisis in a story, but there can be only one climax because the climax is the highest emotional point in the plot. It is the point at which affairs come to a head. A crisis may be precipitated by the entry of some new factor into the plot, but the climax must grow out of or be built up from previous complications and situations. It arrives when the protagonist overcomes his greatest obstacle and the antagonist faces his deserved doom. It appears as the logical result of all that has gone before it. It is the dramatic outcome of the conflict and it must concern the affairs of the principal character.

To increase the dramatic value of the climax, strengthen preceding conflict and increase the strength of the motivating factors until they naturally develop a stronger climax.

The climax, the "big" scene should, as a rule, produce more emotion in the minds of the audience than any previous situation. All that comes *after* this climax must necessarily be less dramatic; therefore the climax should be very near the end of the story. It need not necessarily be a noisy scene, nor one in which the actors will be called on to display the most intense emotion or to indulge in the most violent physical action, but it must have some quality that will grip the audience. There must be something in it that arouses a responsive note in the minds and the hearts of those who see it. If you do not get a thrill out of your own "big" scene, it is doubtful if the audience will. Until this scene, the audience should be kept in doubt as to whether or not the protagonist will be able to overcome the obstacles that confront him. His predicament should be so dramatically presented that, for the time being, it is the problem of the audience.

Do not make life easy for the hero. The more he has to overcome, the stronger both he and the plot will be. Pile up his suffering, his anguish; force him into a tight corner, into a fight of brawn or wits; let him dare all for an ideal; let him flout custom and environment and wealth for something worth while and, eventually, win all.

The "big" scene is apt to fail if "planted" or "telegraphed"; nevertheless, all the information which the audience needs to understand this scene should be given to it beforehand. If possible, let the climax hit the spectator with sudden shock and you will reap additional advantage. It is important, however, not to sacrifice relevancy in an effort to be dramatic, for the climax must be in harmony with previous action and emotion. It is the careful building up of previous scenes, increasing in interest as they approach the climax, that makes this, the "big" scene, a success. The climax, however, must not be too easily guessed. Some plots allow the writer to tantalize the audience by withholding it until the very end of the story. Never sure of just what it is going to get, the audience waits with greater interest the outcome of the plot.

Do not let important action take place too rapidly; slow it sufficiently so that its importance will be clear to the spectator. Lead up to this important action, suggest what is about to happen, then postpone it at the critical moment, and just when the audience thinks it may not happen, show it.

Once the interplay of plot action starts, it must move onward; it must progress to the end. The action must be significant and productive, but while it should be continuous, it cannot all be of the same dramatic strength. A discriminating subordination of minor events to those that are important is required, and the proper alternation of action of varying strength gives a pleasing sense of rhythm.

Keep the action running *from* the events that express the protagonist's desire *to* those that tend to prevent him from achieving it. He must not drift along. Keeping him fighting to shape his own destiny unless the plot (probably unwisely) calls for him to be the victim of an unkind fate. The story should end with the plot actors in a different position, mentally or romantically or financially, from that which the plot first postulated. Their path through the story must have brought them somewhere, and given some impression of character change.

In real life, action always occurs in chains. Each action, each event, is at the same time an effect and a cause. For example, Mrs. Jones warns Jones that she will not stand for his excessive drinking. As a result of her action, Jones, in defiance, goes on a terrific bender; as a result of his act, Mrs. Jones leaves him; as a result of this, Jones discovers that he cannot live without her; and as a result of his discovery, he is impelled to go to her and insist that she return to him; this in turn impels Mrs. Jones to tell him that she is planning to marry another man; this enrages Jones to the point at which he shoots and kills her; this results in his going to jail, and so on, and so on.

Everything that ever happens is the result of some preceding action or emotion. Nothing happens by chance, at least as far as the film-story writer is concerned, and in the film-story plot everything must be linked together and must follow in whatever sequence makes the action most consecutive and uninterrupted. It is not chronological sequence, but cause and effect that link together the events and situations, and its value as cause or effect should determine whether any particular situation actually belongs in the story. No situation is injected into the story for itself but only because of what it contributes to the whole, and all situations are so integrated as to give the audience the sense of one entire and single picture. Each situation carries the story forward. Each should hint at the set of circumstances that is to follow, and each should be the logical step toward the next.

Plot situations cannot be piled up or merely interpolated. They must be built into their proper places or, to change the metaphor, they must be used as the woof and warp of the story. Separate rings of action merely weaken the impression that might be made by holding to the main line of the plot. Nor can feebleness of situation be overcome by multiplying incidents. If a story lacks dramatic interest, it will not help it just to stick in a few more events. The dramatic possibilities *inherent in the plot and characterization* must be developed.

What is needed are situations that are fraught with dramatic possibility, and you cannot make up for lack of real plot situations or for lack of effective action by having actors light a cigarette, apply cosmetics or take a drink. These things are stage business, best left to the actor or director. Very rarely are they essential to the plot and they can be distracting. Nor will it help to insert stunts or music unless these things have a legitimate place in the story.

When you have a clear idea of the plot, write out the entire story as interestingly as you can. Keep in mind that the audience is not interested in seeing actions which people do generally, but in seeing what specific actions specific persons do in specific circumstances. Like the newspaper story, the first scenes must give the audience the answer to the questions, who, where, what, when and why. *What* refers to the conflict. *Why* to the motivation. These opening scenes inform the audience whether the story is tragedy, comedy, farce, melodrama or romance, and indicate the particular treatment. They show the place and the time and initiate the plot action in a manner to arouse the expectancy of the audience. Expectancy and interest are strengthened by making plain the situation out of which the opening conflict arises.

It is better not to work too long over the first scenes. By the time you reach the end of your story you will discover what additional matter must be included in the first scene in order to make the plot clear. Overwrite action rather than underwrite it, and make certain that the plot purpose is evident.

The film story should not be written in continuity form. It should not include reference to anything connected with the technique of film-making. It is easier for an agent or studio reader to grasp the good points of a story if it is not cluttered up with shooting directions, but the writer should understand continuity form and think of it while writing and should make sure that all the material necessary for the continuity, except the technical breakups and camera angles, is included.

Write as if you were writing a story for a magazine, that is, in continuous narrative. It may be written in the present or past tense, and it is best to write it in the third person, thus keeping the omniscient viewpoint and permitting the reader to know everything pertaining to the story, although certain information may be kept, for a time, from the characters themselves.

The opening paragraph may deal with character, place, period, event, mood or a mixture of these, whichever best introduces the plot. Here are some examples:

1. Bill Carter was a handsome and prepossessing young man who recently had become a fiend—a candid camera fiend. Everywhere that Bill went, his pocket camera went, too, and unfortunately for him, Bill's hobby was snapping photographs of pretty girls. Let a pretty girl come in sight and out came Bill's tiny camera at once. He had been snubbed, scolded, threatened with arrest and even punched by an angry escort, all without the slightest effect. There was something pernicious about the grip this habit had on him.

2. Bolton's Beach is a summer resort frequented by persons of wealth and position. On a rocky point that juts into the sea is the spacious and lavishly equipped Beach Club, its driveway usually lined with cars of expensive make in the care of uniformed chauffeurs. Admission to the club is reserved exclusively for its members and their guests, but this did not in the least trouble young Ken Porter who had just arrived in town with only two dollars to his name, no position at all, and whose most prized possession was the ancient and topless roadster in which he boldly approached the Club steps.

3. The Civil War had ended. Ragged, half-starved soldiers of the Confederacy made their way south on weary feet, but politicians, such as fat Jabe Bedell who was intent on plunder, rode south on the red plush seats of the trains.

4. The Langley Handicap is being run. People throng the enclosure and the stands and, oblivious to all else, gaze out into the brilliant sunlight where Baccarat, the favorite, is running a neck ahead of Lovely Jane. Suddenly Baccarat swerves, staggers and falls. His jockey, thrown over his head, rolls to the edge of the track. When the track is clear again he hastens to his horse. Blood streams from a small round hole in the animal's head. Baccarat has been shot.

5. Raknitz castle stands on a lonely hill far from any village. About it the forest is overgrown so heavily that the sun no longer penetrates its foliage. The castle garden is overgrown with weeds; the castle door is barred, its windows shuttered. No smoke comes from its chimneys. There is no indication of the life, evil and powerful, that flourishes inside its walls.

6. Somewhere in the giant cable that bore the weight of the great girders swinging high above the concrete wall was a flaw; a flaw that remained unseen during a too hasty inspection. There was a flaw, also, in the character of Big Mike, the foreman, that caused him to vent his fraying temper on his men and to drive them mercilessly and beyond the limit imposed by regard for human life.

The photoplay version of *The Scoundrel* stressed character when it opened in the book-publishing house of Anthony Mallard and, through the dialogue of his associates and of the persons waiting to see him, and by his own actions, revealed him as a very despicable person.

The opening of *Libeled Lady* emphasized setting by depicting a newspaper office under such pressure of work that the managing editor was unable to get away to his own wedding.

The Broadway Melody of 1936 began with excited action on the part of a newspaper columnist broadcasting gossip which he considered fresh and interesting but which he discovered was considered quite the opposite by his employers.

All the action, as far as possible, must be related from the viewpoint of the principal character. He must be kept in the foreground. Strength is lost if, for example, you say, "The native hastily drew his knife and started for Harlek," instead of, "Harleck rose hastily as the native drew a knife and started for him." This makes a more coherent story, and it appeals to the star and the studio paying his salary. No star is going to be pleased with a story that keeps relegating him to second place. Let the reader get the hero's, or heroine's impressions of the situations and see the effect they have on him. Your characters, however, cannot see, hear or know anything outside of their own viewpoints unless you give them and the reader additional information. It may be helpful to try to see the story through the eyes of the principal characters as this may reveal where they have been inconsistent in speech or action.

In checking over the plot, see that the important action centers about not more than three or four principal characters. In the time allowed for a photoplay only one, or two at the most, can gain the audience's sympathy so that it weeps or rejoices with them. Even in stories dealing with the affairs of a specific group, such as prisoners, exiles or emigrants, there must be one or two who carry the story or it will have the repetitious group effect of a ballet.

If the principal characters are two in number, they must not be equal in importance. Even in a romantic love story, either the girl or the man holds a greater share of the audience's attention. In addition to the need for concentrating interest on one or two plot actors rather than dissipating it over many, another reason for having only a very few principal characters is that the studios want a film story to have a star part; and this is not unreasonable when the expense of keeping stars on contracts is considered. They want a role that will exploit the star, that will give him an acting part and plenty of opportunity to display his ability, and in outlining a plot it is well to keep in mind that the chief actor in a photoplay must be far more active than one in the usual novel or short story. As a matter of fact, the writer of commercial film stories is definitely limited to the use of very active protagonists powerfully impelled by emotion. This, however, is no great restriction. As Clemence Dane has said, "To have every imaginable character in daily life at your beck and call, to know that every imaginable action can become part of your plot, is too much of a good thing."

The dominant character must be most completely outlined and given the largest share of time, and the supplementary characters given time according to their importance to the plot.

It is advisable to introduce the lead in such a way that the audience will realize his importance; and usually he is introduced directly in the first sequence. In this sequence also it should be made clear that he wants something which, apparently, he cannot get, and that he is going to make an effort to get it; and this effort should involve a strong assertion of volition.

Make certain that the desires, aims or ambitions of the lead are worthwhile and strong. If he does not appear to care whether he succeeds in attaining his desires, neither will anybody else. And all that he does or says should be the action and speech that could relate only to a person with his particular traits, views and habits. Unless for some definite purpose, which is made clear to the audience, he should neither say or do things inconsistent with his determining emotion, nor should other characters do things to him or say things to him that are not consistent with the response that such an emotion naturally would arouse. Depicting and arousing emotion in and through the film story is so important that I have given it a separate chapter.

The main actor and the opposition actor, personal or impersonal, should be so nearly balanced in power (but not at the same time) that the audience is kept in doubt as to which will win the struggle. Generally it is advisable to keep the opposing characters alternating, with not too frequent meetings, until the complication is developed. Give the opposing force, be this poverty, person or limitation of some kind, great importance in the first sequence so that he or it clearly may be worth fighting.

When the principal in a plot is one of whom the audience is unlikely to approve, his words and actions must be those that will arouse great attention; otherwise the audience will instinctively swing toward the characters it likes the better. If the heroine is little more than the objective of the hero you must keep her part subordinate; in the same manner balance a plot having a woman lead and a male character second in importance.

The film-story plot, unlike the novel, must be free from thin action; that is, action spread over too many persons. A novel may have a number of characters who have little to do, but, except for atmosphere characters, the film story plot needs to keep its actors busy. If you wish to retain such characters, build up the plot in such a fashion as to give them appropriate or relevant action. It is quite legitimate, however, to use a character solely for atmosphere. A pitiful old woman in a shawl warming herself by the fireside may have little part in the plot, but she may help establish the needed atmosphere as long as she obviously has some meaning for the other characters. The fact that a plot actor has little to do frequently indicates that the writer has not sufficiently thought out his character. If you know a character thoroughly, you will know what he will do in any given circumstances and precisely at what point he can be effective in your plot.

A film story needs considerably more than the bare essentials of the plot. It should include whatever is necessary to make the characterization and atmosphere distinctive and interesting, but when you plan description think of it solely as information for the continuity writer and the director and not as an opportunity for "fine writing."

Think of the action of your story in scenes that run in sequences. A sequence is a section of a story that falls normally into a certain place or time. Some plot outlines naturally fall in sequences suitable for the photoplay but, as a rule, the ordinary plot outline needs considerable building up. In each sequence or group of scenes that belong together, some problem should be solved or some predicament overcome and another appear, and each sequence should carry the story forward.

Each scene should grow logically out of the preceding one and should prepare the audience for the one that is to follow. Order is the film story's, as well as heaven's, first law, and this order calls for a line of scenes ascending in interest and dramatic strength. Every scene, every situation, must offer some appeal to an audience. Theoretically, each sequence should be stronger at its end than at its beginning, but this is not always possible in practice without twisting the plot in an illogical fashion. The first sequences must not promise more than they can deliver, or be "epic" in quality and followed by scenes that dwindle in importance. Sequences may be long or short; that is, from a few seconds to several minutes. A tense situation may run for two or three minutes; one with fast action for a few seconds only.

Each situation, if possible, should have its own touch of the dramatic; should develop a minor crisis; should use contrasting action and contrasting characterization, all to maintain the hold of the story on the audience.

Two or more situations sometimes may be built into one forceful one by combining them and stressing the important action. A film story submitted to me included a scene in which two characters met to scheme a robbery. The next scene showed one of these characters hastening to the home of a third man and by threats inducing him, very reluctantly, to agree to take part in the scheme. By combining at one place and at one time all the important action in these scenes, it was possible to build a single scene of greater value.

A relatively unimportant scene should not be given much space or time and no single scene should be long enough to tire the spectator. A number of very short scenes, one after the other, gives the effect of a disturbed, unsettled and possibly exciting condition. The human mind will comprehend only a certain amount at one time and, therefore, the photoplay audience will not pay much attention to a number of unrelated things presented to it simultaneously. Yet it is inadvisable to have many situations involving only two persons; even a romantic love story plot should have additional characters.

An unusual location may be used to give a new twist to an old plot. One that would be commonplace if located in an American town, may become novel and intriguing if set in some interesting foreign environment. The theme of *The Good Earth*, for example, could be developed in a story that might logically be set in the agricultural regions of almost any country, but by setting it in China, Mrs. Buck offers Occidentals an especially interesting background and much novel detail incident to Chinese life. Location may color character as well as incident. People living in a Pennsylvania Dutch settlement, on New York's Park Avenue, or on the Florida Keys may be fundamentally alike, but they will show certain minor distinctions caused by differences in their environment.

The locale will be determined largely by theme and plot action. A certain geographical location may be an integral part of the plot, but if choice is permitted by the plot material, select that which will strengthen the emotional response you aim to secure, that will display your characters in their most natural setting and give the best opportunity for action.

In addition to the physical location, the locale or setting includes *the social strata involved,* i. e., the business world, society, a slum, the underworld, a village, some particular mode of life, and customs and social habits. It also involves the particular era, modern, Civil War, or The Gay Nineties, for example. In addition, it includes time and mood or atmosphere. All these things should be selected with a view to increasing the dramatic effect. Victor Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre Dame* owes much to the atmosphere of its setting. In Maugham's *Rain,* nature's mood was a determining factor. Mankind is to some extent affected by its natural environment; the mountaineer and the dweller in the lowland view life differently.

Dickens often adapted his setting to strengthen the emotion of his characters. Those that are happy sit before a cozy fire, the poor shiver in the cold, the hurried hasten in the heat and the melancholy walk in the dusk. Stevenson liked prophetic settings that forecast the mood or even the events of the story. In Arnold Bennett's stories, the "Five Towns" provide a background so closely in accord with characterizations that the readers feel the characters could have existed nowhere else.

When we see characters in a particular setting, we assume certain things to be true of them. It is the writer's work to place his characters in circumstances and places that will most fully reveal them and these circumstances and places very infrequently are those where he finds them. A kitchen, a drawing-room, a ship deck, or a hospital, each offer a setting for specific scenes and characters and one cannot be substituted for the other without loss of advantage. It is not the place in itself, but its connotation that is important. It is the significance of a particular time and place that warrants its use for a particular scene. We assume from luxurious and tasteful surroundings that the owners are wealthy and cultured and have certain social habits. A scene laid in a Russian commune suggests that certain political tenets are held by its inhabitants. As a rule, any definite environment affects and is affected by the emotions, the actions and the fate of the persons in it.

A setting should be appropriate to the characterization and action presented. Sunlight does not seem to fit tragedy, nor does gloom attach itself naturally to comedy, and there is little point in placing slapstick situations in a drawing-room. A story of ambitious greed might be set in the business section of a city or in a home of luxury, but not if the greed were that of a miserly sinister Uriah Heep. A Mrs. Wiggs should not be taken out of her cabbage patch until the end of the story.

Occasionally photoplays show personalities in surroundings far too ornate to be credible. A humble background may be more effective than an elegant one, although audiences like to see "what they wish they had" and "places you would go if you were rich." In a society picture the heroine should be given a chance to wear her beautiful gowns. Do not keep her in a kitchen for long. Men, women and children like to see beautiful clothes and varied backgrounds.

A setting may be used as a plot contrast: a lovely refined girl in dingy squalid surroundings or a character with a high degree of spirituality and love of beauty in a sordid setting, but only for the purpose of allowing these characters to fight their way to more appropriate environments. In the setting for a romantic love story there should be nothing unpleasant or repellent, for romance is heightened by idyllic surroundings. Make your backgrounds as beautiful, as grim, as pathetic in setting as your plot requires and let the atmosphere and setting add charm and force to the picture, but keep in mind that in all ways the setting should agree with the theme and with the expected audience response.

The "big" scene or climax is best located in a setting that will heighten its drama, but nothing in that setting should be permitted to draw attention from the action. The setting, after all, is only a means to an end.

Variety in setting is an aid in holding attention. There have been successful stage plays—Charles Rann Kennedy's *The Servant in the House*, for one—that have had a single setting; but a motion picture with only one setting would be apt to be very monotonous. On the other hand, too many different locations or settings may make a story jerky and annoying to the spectator.

A setting may have symbolical significance; that is, it may include the representation of ideas or qualities. It may have a strong atmosphere of tragedy, or humor or romance, or it may be emblematic of some politico-social stress. Symbolism is easily overdone, a notable case in point appearing in *The Scarlet Empress*. If a film-story plot offers opportunity for effective symbolism, it is advisable usually, and especially for the tyro, merely to suggest it and to let the continuity writer or director work out its detail.

Sounds other than speech may be made part of the setting and may be used to symbolize a particular mood or to increase the dramatic intensity. The joyous pealing of bells for a wedding, their solemn tolling for a funeral, the song of birds, the whirring of machinery, the rhythmic beating of waves on the shore, and instrumental music, all can be made an integral part of a plot.

Sounds which we have become accustomed to regard as normal for their particular situations and locations—the noise of a storm, of the surf, of a city street, of a farm, a factory, a store, a train, of artillery, airplanes, pistol shots, fog horns, church bells, the breaking of china, or wood, the sound of hammers, the thud of hoofbeats, are part of the plot. It is not essential to build these into the written story unless the sound plays a particular part in the plot or is significant in relation to the theme. Nor is it necessary always to show the source of a sound; church bells may be heard ringing even if the spectator does not see the church. It is the director's work to see that normal sounds are incidental. Sound can turn tragedy into comedy. It can make real a setting, a background, a storm, a battle, or play the part of a personality.

It is possible to start a novel without having a specific ending in mind, but *both purpose and ending of the film story should be clearly in the mind of the writer before it is written* because the story naturally ends when its theme is proved. The ending should not suggest that the story stopped at a certain scene merely because someone cut the film at that point.

Theoretically the end of a story cannot be altered without changing the story because the end should be implied in the beginning; but in one sense all endings are artificial. Life presents few moments, if any, when all a person's hopes and aims are achieved and the ends of his and of others' affairs neatly tied up as a story ending demands. The ending, then, is merely a cutting off and a tidying up at the most satisfactory point. Finish the story as soon as possible after the "big" scene, as soon as the main problem is solved, the difficulty overcome. But not before the expected rewards and penalties are meted, for the audience wants to see the characters "get what is coming to them." The final sequence should show the reaction of the protagonist when he has achieved his desire.

Let the audience be satisfied that the future of the principals is settled. By way of illustration, consider a plot concerning a badly henpecked little man who strongly desires to raise sufficient money to send his mother-in-law back to her own home in a far-distant state. After many ludicrous disappointments and difficulties and just as her outrageous activities are about to cause him to lose his job, and his daughter to lose her fiancé, the little man manages to get the money. It would not satisfy an audience if the story ended with the picture of him receiving the money. It would want to see the mother-in-law packing or boarding the train or in some situation that would make it clear that her departure was a certainty. Occasionally the working out of a happy solution to the plot problem is something that in reality would take years. In such a case the audience must be given assurance that it will be worked out satisfactorily.

Outside of a detective story, the ending that involves a surprising twist of plot events is not as generally successful as might be expected. It is too apt to be artificial and to leave the audience "up in the air" or to deprive it of the very information it would like to have. Surprise plot twists are better placed in the earlier situations. Let characters do the unexpected thing, or do the expected thing in an unexpected way, or let them react to their circumstances in an unusual fashion. The studios are waiting for stories with appealing and unusual "bits of business."

Temporarily withholding some important piece of information makes it possible to surprise an audience. In *My Man Godfrey,* the audience sees Cornelia deliberately place her necklace under Godfrey's mattress in the hope that he will be charged with theft. The audience awaits the outcome of this scheme in suspense and, as the police in their search strip

Godfrey's bed, it is surprised to see that the necklace has gone and is gratified that Godfrey is not arrested. Later on in the story, the audience is again surprised when it finds that Godfrey had discovered the necklace, concealed it, and used it to save the financial affairs of Cornelia's family.

We are constantly told by dramatic critics that an audience wants the "inevitable" ending. Like many other general statements, this one needs qualifying. Inasmuch as the film-story writer has the ending of his story in mind before he starts to write, he will select his material, if he aspires to commercial success, so that the inevitable ending is naturally a "happy one," and, of course, he will make it as convincing as possible. It may be good art, but it is not good business to send an audience home depressed and blue. Happiness, however, should apply to the audience's reaction and not necessarily to the condition of the characters depicted. It must be sent away with its sense of justice satisfied whether or not the story itself ends happily. *Camille* ends with the death of the heroine and the painful remorse of her lover, but the audience is satisfied because it is the only ending that logically fits the particular series of situations involved. In a recent novel that reached the ranks of the best-sellers and which was submitted for photoplay use, the author's idea, apparently, was to draw the reader's sympathy to a vigorous and somewhat unpleasant old woman and her pet, an old horse; actually, in the case of many readers, sympathy flowed to the woman's daughter who struggled for cleanliness and decency, and the old woman's demise was regarded as a happy ending because it left the daughter free. Death is the happiest ending for a character who would find life intolerable. But though strict adherence to logic may require that, under the particular circumstances of some plot, the hero shall fail to achieve his desire, the audience prefers to see him succeed and win happiness in the last reel.

Other factors may influence an ending. In *The Good Earth* not only the desire to please the audience but the matter of winning Chinese good will impelled the ending in which the Chinese peasant hero makes his peace with the wife he had discarded.

It is amazing how far an audience will go to foster its own illusion that it is in doubt as to the outcome of the plot. An apparently inveterate movie-goer who sat next to me during the showing of a photoplay that seemed to thrill her, gasped audibly at the heroine's difficulties and exclaimed, "If I didn't know that this just *has* to end all right, I'd be awfully worried about that girl!"

The principal character, however, should appear to attain his final success because of his superior qualities. An audience will consider it distinctly unfair if the author, disguised as fate or coincidence, bestows undeserved success upon him. Before he is awarded the girl he loves, her faith in him must be justified.

To use coincidence is an ever present temptation to the fiction writer and one he is often warned to avoid. But it is merely the *presentation* of matter as coincidence that is to be avoided. Almost any situation which appears to involve coincidence can be rewritten so as to remove all suggestion of it. Consider by way of illustration, a film story concerning the career of a blackmailer posing as a reputable business man, whose downfall started when the office janitor found in a waste basket a canceled check, stolen from a person who had been blackmailed, and took it to his friend in the police department. Whether or not the finding of the damning check at the psychological moment by a person in a position to do something about it would appear as coincidence depended very largely on the way it was presented. In the story as written there is no impression of coincidence because the reader, in the first few pages, meets the old janitor working in the blackmailer's office, sees him watching the blackmailer as he drives off in his expensive car, and also is aware that the old man often "passes the time of day" with his friend in the detective bureau.

The check went into the waste basket as the natural result of the mentality and actions of the blackmailer's secretary, hired for her unsophistication and ignorance, who is depicted as being untidy and forever in a hurry. Long before the check that twisted the plot appeared, the reader had accepted the janitor's access to the basket and the girl's careless handling of papers.

Most persons will admit that coincidence is, apparently, a factor in real life; it is only when one is produced like a rabbit out of a hat at the exact moment that it is needed to solve a specific problem, when it is apparently cut to fit a need, that it is objectionable. It does lessen drama because it relieves the characters of the necessity of solving their own problems. Recognizable coincidence should never be used in connection with the solution of the plot problem but, unless it is something that strains the imagination, it can be used at the beginning of the plot inasmuch as it is the writer's prerogative to select any condition he chooses for the premise of his story.

If the most important scene seems to be either coincidental or slightly irrelevant, work back through the story and weave or build in "plants" that will lead logically to it. A "plant" is advance information which the reader or audience must have *before* the scene affected by it. Neither plant nor scene should stick out "like a sore thumb" nor as if it were forcibly applied to the story. It should fit so smoothly into dialogue or action that the audience accepts it as part of the immediate scene.

In *Café Metropole,* an otherwise well-directed picture, the heroine suddenly breaks the story to take the young hero to a hatter's to get a new hat. As he is more interested in the girl than in getting a hat, the scene is amusing, but it would have been a much more integral part of the picture if, previously, the heroine had indicated even by a single remark that she did not like his hats. As it was, the scene seemed to have little relation to the rest of the plot.

A catchy title may induce a story editor to run through a manuscript that does not otherwise—that is, by familiarity with the author's name—invite his attention, and a curiosity-arousing title on posters and signs and in advertisements always will draw an audience. But it must not betray the plot too much, and it should be sufficiently short so that it may be set in electric lights on theater canopies.

Euphony is desirable in a title; so is anything that is provocative or any wording suggestive of something that is holding the attention of the public at the moment.

Film-story titles may be thematic, or they may be the name of the protagonist, or be based upon character or on atmosphere or both. Thematic titles usually are effective: *Sauce for the Goose, The Spendthrift, Tarnish, Reputation, The Easiest Way* and *Bitter Sweet* arouse curiosity and suggest drama.

Captain Blood, Rose Marie, David Copperfield and *Rhodes* name the main personality in the story. *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch, The Barrets of Wimpole Street, Three Live Ghosts, The Scarlet Empress, The Green Goddess, The Champ,* are excellent titles suggesting character. *Let Us Be Gay, The Sea Bat, The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, Alice in Wonderland,* are atmospheric titles. *Blondie of the Follies* and *Rose of the Rancho* combine both atmosphere and character. *Three Wise Fools, The Secret Six* and *Is Zat So?* are intriguing and easy to remember. *What Every Woman Knows* arouses curiosity and concerns an always interesting subject—woman.

When you have written out the complete draft of your film story, sharpen it by going over it and *taking out all that can be* *omitted without destroying its meaning.* Cut out everything that can be cut out and still leave the story clear and dramatic. Leave nothing that does not advance the story. Survey each of the scenes to see that it is complete as to background, place, time, action and characters. Try to see it as it would appear if screened. Check each scene for its cause and effect and its value to the plot; see that it achieves its particular purpose. If you discover a scene that can be taken out without affecting the plot you have, in that fact itself, evidence that the scene either does not belong in the plot at all or, more likely, that it is not properly integrated. You must have at least one scene that will stir an audience. Examine setting, atmosphere, plot and character to see if any of these can be made to produce increased dramatic effect. Test your story for the opportunities it offers the leads; test it for plausibility of incident and situation; for artificiality; and above all, for scenes that will get a response from the audience.

Each bit of important action should have its cause and its accompanying emotion or feeling indicated. Explanation cannot be photographed and it rarely is necessary to give any in a film story. *Show* what you wish to explain. *Picture* the setting, picture the characters. Words naming an emotion do not take the place of the picturization of a person who actually is experiencing the emotion. Instead of saying that John was fearfully angry, let John act in such a manner as will convince the reader that he is fearfully angry. The photoplay will give only such visual images of action and scenery as the camera can present and such sounds as the reproducing machinery can effect; therefore all emotion must be expressed by such methods.

In length, the completed story may take from twenty-five to a hundred pages of double-spaced typing. But it should be kept in mind that to write a story with appealing characters in dramatic action calls not for length as much as for discerning selection of words. Many an original can be told effectively in less than ten thousand words and this brevity may induce studio officials to read the original instead of merely a short synopsis of it. In any event, it should offer enough material to make a photoplay that will run ninety minutes. Remember that it must warrant the spending of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Do not expect to complete it in a few days or even in a few weeks. The professional writer may spend three months or more on a single story, and he expects to write and revise it, to cut and to build it repeatedly. If it would be more effective written from an entirely different plot angle, he does not hesitate to work out a new plot and rewrite the entire story, sometimes selecting a different character to be the protagonist. He moves his characters and situations about until he finds the place where they are most appropriate and effective. He tells his story in colorful words, in verbs of strong action. He studies the story to see if he has started it as far on in the action as possible. The free-lance writer is fortunate in that, when he has gone over it several times, he may lay the story aside for a few weeks before going over it again. The writer on contract, however, is often obliged to have his material ready for specific dates and on short notice.

Revision does not mean solely the changing of words and sentences in the story; it is not simply the correction of rhetorical errors. Words, as such, rarely appear in the finished photoplay except in dialogue. Revision concerns the manipulations of story material, plot lines, background, characterization; of all that makes up the picture as it will appear before the audience. The best ways of utilizing and manipulating these things can be learned only by experimenting with them. It is only by a study of photoplays as seen on the screen that discrimination can be developed to a point where it recognizes the most pictorially successful effect.

IV. MOTIVATION

The commonest source of sentimentality is insincerity.

—F. M. PERRY

AN understanding of motivation is essential to realistic fictional characterization, because all human activity is influenced by some prior activity. Not only must the writer know "what makes people do things" but, if what his characters are doing is at all important, he must let his reader know their motives. Never give a reader or an audience a chance to ask, "Why did he do that?" concerning an important character or an important action. For, if motivation is not clear and easily comprehensible, the audience loses interest and the bond between it and the character is broken. Consciously or unconsciously, an audience will assume that if the character has no good reason, or no reason at all, for what he is doing, there is no point in his doing it. Yet motivation seldom needs to be shown in great detail. Give a suggestion of it and, if it is at all reasonable, the audience will accept the idea and carry it to its logical conclusion.

Also, lack of motivation offends the intelligence for, as has been pointed out, physical action is meaningless unless the mental state that prompted it is made clear. If a plot actor throws a chair across the room, the action has meaning only if the audience knows that he is enraged or that he has some definite reason for so doing. In fact, the mental state may arouse more interest than its concomitant action. Events must not simply *happen* in the film story. The writer must account for everything important that his plot actors do.

In the delightful comedy roles of Edward Everett Horton, it is his mental state as revealed by his actions that arouses the amused sympathy of the audience. There is an amusing incongruity between his excessive conscientiousness, or good-nature, or inferiority complex, and the situations that confront him.

Once an audience has accepted a motive, it will accept almost any act, no matter how far it deviates from normal, if it rises consistently from that motive. Once the audience understood the spirit that moved *Emma* in the photoplay of that name, it accepted her sacrificial act as the natural thing; in fact, the inevitable thing for her to do. To understand any action it is necessary to understand what impelled it and the relation of motive to act in human affairs is so important that the law courts in considering criminal cases always give weight to motive. Good intent often serves to mitigate the punishment meted for commission of crime. Not only lack of convincingness, but frequently the lack of freshness or originality in stories, is due to the commonplaceness and the limited range of the motivation employed by the authors. Because of this I am suggesting, in this chapter, lines of thought that may serve to broaden the writer's concept of human motivation.

At this stage of civilization, we are surrounded by forces that tend strongly to prevent our unconsidered speech and action. We rarely say what we think; we say what seems most expedient under the circumstances. While decision and action that are deliberately planned may reveal the individual and largely determine his situation, it is really acts and speech impelled by emotion strong enough to destroy his guards of convention and expedience that reveal unerringly the real man. No matter how sudden and apparently uncharacteristic an action, something in the true nature of the individual made it possible. A great percentage of crime is tagged, and sometimes excused, as being the result of impulse; but the underlying character must include some criminal tendency or the individual would not so quickly recognize the opportunity to commit crime. Feats of heroism are frequently impulsive, yet these indicate that the underlying character is marked by courage or recklessness.

Man is born with certain primeval instinctive desires: the desire to satisfy thirst and hunger, to mate, to protect himself from the elements, to avoid suffering and to escape death. These are powerful factors in determining human conduct and are so generally realized that they require no explanation when offered as motivating factors to a reader or an audience. It may be taken for granted that anything that stimulates these desires will be expected to cause some action, and that anything producing obvious personal benefit needs little or no explication. People know that if a character is to have any semblance of life, he must have these instincts and whatever he does to satisfy them needs no explanation from the writer. It is largely because all mankind has the same instincts that photoplays are intelligible to all races. Man has also a common stock of elementary knowledge, of recollections concerning life, that is taken for granted by all. It is not necessary to explain why a cut finger bleeds or that, if a car rams a building, something will give way. Nor is the writer called upon to account for man's activity in general. Life is action; man is an active being. Therefore it is natural for him to be doing something, and motive need be shown only in the case of specific acts that affect the plot.

In accounting for human conduct, some psychologists declare that we have numerous minds including an animal mind, a savage mind, a child mind, and a "civilized" mind, all of which originated at different eras of racial development. Under this hypothesis, if you probe a cultured sophisticate, you may expect to find a barbarian. After this sophisticate goes hungry for a week, say the believers in this theory, he will gladly eat raw flesh as did his savage forefathers. Here, as usual, we see the unfortunate effect of generalizing. There have been hundreds of hunger strikers in various countries who after a week of starvation have refused not only raw flesh, but good well-cooked meals. Social workers can tell of mothers who literally have starved to death that their children might have what food was available, and of men who have died rather than break into a store and steal food. Police blotters reveal much to convince one that the "scratching" has to go deeper than starvation to cause the normal man and woman to become savage. Again, we are told by those who cling to the close presence of the savage mind: let there be a whiff of smoke in a theater and the average man will become panic-stricken and trample his fellows. Some men would, undoubtedly, but allowance must be made for the uncounted thousands who, when confronted with danger, have deliberately given their own lives that others might be saved. It is not too much to say that every great disaster produces not only acts of panic, but also acts of heroism and self-sacrifice.

Moreover, proponents of this theory tell us that if the civilized man is compelled to live in the wilds of Africa, he will adopt the ways and attitudes of the natives. Yet has not nearly every explorer told of meeting white men isolated in the jungles who maintained not only their civilized habit of thought but also the conventions and manners of civilization?

There seems to be considerable evidence that mankind is slowly building up what we may call, for want of a better name, an entirely civilized mind—perhaps it is a consciousness of spiritual or moral responsibility for the race—which is becoming powerful enough to destroy savage and animal tendencies. The writer of fiction who strikes at the layers of savage and animal in his readers, naturally reaches those readers in whom such layers are potent.

The psychoanalysts consider man as motivated by a subconscious mind, largely taken up with sex, and often expressing itself through the symbolic dream as it appears in Somerset Maugham's *Rain*. But the writer of stories intended for the photoplay will do well to omit all reference to the psychoanalytical patter of repression, libido, censor, wish-fulfillment, *et cetera*. His protagonist, however, may lend himself to psychoanalysis, if anyone cares to subject him to such treatment, just as long as he acts from motives that the audience can easily discern and comprehend.

The operation of fate, of some blind force, some destiny that thwarts man's desires in spite of all his efforts, is not as successful as motivation on the screen as it is in novels such as Thomas Hardy's. In the photoplay fortune may smile or frown, or "Lady Luck" may appear opportunely, but the movie-goers have little use for seeing man depicted wholly as the helpless puppet of some outside force. Nor do they, at least so far as life in the photoplay is concerned, believe in a mechanistic universe—one in which human acts, mental or physical, are nothing more than reactions to outside stimuli that follow definite chemical or mechanical laws. Under this reaction hypothesis, the effect is modified only by the state of the person when the stimulus (which may be anything that acts upon the human nervous system) is applied. According to this theory, not only is man merely a mechanism, but the universe is also, and it and man and all that he does can be explained through chemical or mechanical interpretation.

The moving-picture audience seems to want none of this. It still appears to believe consciously or subconsciously that something or someone created the world and steadfastly or intermittently watches over mankind and is the real force behind all life.

Among what may be called the secondary instincts, those common natural impulses that must be made clear to the audience, one that serves as powerful motivation for human conduct is *acquisitiveness*. In modern life it often appears in the form of an over-developed sense of possession that is productive of tragedy. The mother possesses her child to an extent that dwarfs and inhibits it emotionally, or wife or husband possesses a mate to the point where the mate becomes crushed or defeated. Men are possessed, even obsessed, by their desire for riches, or by their business; and women by their children or, like the heroine of *Craig's Wife*, by their homes. Climbers of both sexes seek social standing and power to the exclusion of all other interests.

Definitely abnormal states such as conditioned King Lear, Ophelia and other Shakespearean characters, constitute powerful and universally accepted motivation, but are rarely advisable for the film story. They obviously are unpleasant and, as has been pointed out, we can read of suffering and insanity or can see it on the stage with considerably more detachment than we can maintain while seeing it on the screen.

A minor psychosis, that is, an unusual and irrational attitude or habit of mind founded on some unpleasant happening, will serve as motivation if the circumstance from which it arose is made clear. The woman-hater's attitude is explained by the fact that at his most impressionable age a woman treated him badly. The man who hates dogs may have been frightened or bitten by one when he was a child.

Physical disability as distinguished from mental, if not too unpleasant, is an acceptable form of motivation. A sick person is not expected to react as would a well person under the same circumstances. Ill health accounted for the morbidity of Marie Bashkertseff's *Journal*, and for some of the writings of Poe.

Habit serves as a strong motive; the drunkard, the drug-taker, are products of their habits. The miser illustrates the effect of allowing an emotion—avarice, in this case—to become habitual. Morality may be largely a habit, and even self-sacrifice may become one.

Environment may be a powerful motivating factor, for in environment we include not only the physical and geographical surroundings, but also the social habits, customs and training that go with it. In fact, when considered as a force affecting character, it includes all the complexities of modern life: a man's reading matter, the opinions of his family, the politics of his neighbors, even the quality and quantity of his food. Dickens made environment powerfully affect the characters in his novels, and Sinclair Lewis built the plots of his *Main Street* and *Babbitt* very largely on environmental influences. The comedies, *My Man Godfrey* and *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, to mention only two, were greatly strengthened by their social implications.

A tremendous amount of human activity is determined or influenced by *consideration of other people's opinions.* Social disapproval, envy, fear of gossip, are powerful motivating forces. *Keeping Up with the Joneses* pictured a common desire to impress one's fellowmen. Of course, the forceful man who cares not what his neighbors think of him may remake his environment to suit himself.

Custom, the established collective habits—generally moral and sometimes enforced by law—of the group in which he lives not only forms a background and setting for man, but also sets up standards to which his personal behavior must conform if he is to live at peace with his fellows. Any important breach of established custom may start a conflict. The ordinary person, therefore, is likely to fall into easy conformity with custom. If strongly impelled to nonconformity, yet lacking the power to uproot himself, he may be led to make painful efforts to adjust himself to others' habits and so keep himself in a perpetual state of emotional discomfort. Less occasionally, he finds himself so strongly at variance with the customs of those about him that he no longer can live with them and therefore is forced to seek for a group that has customs in accord with his particular ideas. The clash may be so strong that the non-conformist is violently ejected from a group which resents his inability to share their belief that its customs best serve the need of society. When such conflict with custom arises, it is a conflict of ideas, of habits, of tendencies and impulses; it is always emotional, and therefore offers strong plot material.

Human nature always is subject to change and this change may be the result of the pressure of external or internal factors, generally of both. The extreme actions of a mob are due to the fact that some powerful factor has temporarily forced them apart from their ordinary habits of thought and action. When some force causes a social upheaval, custom loses its power. War, education (in the sense of changing and developing appreciations), the economic depression or other disaster, all have served to overthrow custom and to leave stranded those who strive to hold fast to institutions that no longer are valid, and also those who instinctively fight new social ideas, which in time may become as fixed as those formerly in vogue. Human history is made up of conflicts of this character. The conflict between the old and the new, between youth and age, between the idealist and the pragmatist, rises largely from conflicting beliefs in the values of habits and customs.

Heredity is often used as motivation by novelists and can be used effectively in a film story, although the popular belief in its power seems gradually to be lessening.

The most popular type of motivation, for the film story at least, is *the will to succeed.* The situations must leave the characters free to choose their paths of action, and their wills must be powerful enough to hold them to their purpose until they overcome whatever obstacles stand between them and their desires. Given any semblance of reality, the hero who of his own volition fights for success, and largely through his own efforts wins it, always has the audience on his side.

Reason as well as will is always acceptable as a motivating factor. Whether or not with justification, people like to think that their actions are the result of intelligence and reasoning power, and therefore they like photoplays in which the hero is given the ability to "use his wits" and to reason his way out of his difficulties. A completely insane hero would be boring because his actions would be meaningless. Dostoevski's wonderful story, *The Idiot,* is exceptionally interesting because the hero's idiocy exists only in the minds of those about him; until the end, he reasonably might be considered as distressingly logical.

Belief may serve as motivation. In *Anthony and Cleopatra,* Anthony hears that Cleopatra is dead and is moved to fall upon his sword. The report is false and the audience is aware that it is false, but Anthony's belief in its truth is an acceptable reason for his act.

The tremendous force of *fear or ambition* to motivate human behavior needs no argument. Make it clear to an audience that your character is greedy above all else and they know that greed will motivate whatever he does.

Love is all-powerful: It can motivate any character; it can induce an enormous range of action. But it must be consistently expressed until some other emotion displaces it. The screen story, *Poor Little Rich Girl,* would have been strengthened if Mr. Ware's affection for his child had been more consistent. He showed a noticeable lack of concern about his little daughter's whereabouts after she had started for boarding-school. A devoted father, in the habit of having frequent reports on the child's condition, he is satisfied, apparently, to hear nothing from her, her nurse or the school, during a period long enough for her to become a radio performer.

A person's *ideals* and his *moral or religious beliefs* may powerfully affect his character. Loyalty, not only to relative or friend, but to an impersonal cause, or state, or church, or science, has caused many a man to lose his life. Remorse for wrongdoing has changed lives, and unwillingness to violate some religious conviction has led to the migration of great groups of peoples. "For conscience' sake" has long been an impressive influence in the history of mankind.

When a plot depends on a reformation or degeneration of character, the motivation must be sufficiently powerful to make the change credible. It must be emphasized especially because such a difference in an individual cannot be based on anything but a change of ideals, on adherence to a new set of motivating principles.

In real life, people seem not to be very conscious of their own or others' motives—often not at all; and they very frequently act from a mingling of motives. But the characters in the film story, for the sake of distinctness, must show clear-cut motives and generally must be aware of them, just as they need to be definite in the way in which they carry out their purposes.

Similarly, particular circumstances should occur as the result of specific reasons. In *Mutiny on the Bounty,* the ship does not just happen to be in the South Seas. She is there to collect breadfruit trees.

The amateur writer will do well to study the words naming the emotions and feelings and all the secondary states that rise from them. Here he will find the motivating traits that distinguish character and largely determine man's acts. Almost any of the vocabularies, word-books, or thesauri will give hundreds of words relating to the gradations of emotion and feeling that produce human action.

V. THE THEME

As your idea's clear,
Or else obscure,
The expression follows
Perfect or impure.

—BOILEAU, "THE ART OF POETRY"

"IF you cannot state the gist of a play in three lines, it lacks backbone," is an adage long in use by the theatrical world. It is based on the prime necessity of coherence and purpose in any form of drama; in other words, it calls for theme, and all good stories, whether or not the author is aware of it, have a theme.

There seems to be considerable misunderstanding among amateur writers as to what a theme is. A theme is not a plot. It is not "a message" or some didactic factor designed to make people think, nor is it a moral. The film story is not required to preach or to argue for reformation. It has no call to be "uplifting" and its theme may have as little morality as the old verse,

It is a sin
To steal a pin,
But it matters naught
If you don't get caught,

always providing, of course, that the sinner is a likable fellow.

It is sometimes said that theme is any simple idea, such as "love," "vengeance," "divorce," "jealousy." The writer of a film story who does not conceive his theme in a more specific and concrete form than this is headed for trouble. There is nothing in such general ideas to give purpose to a story, and purpose it must have.

Nor is theme to be confused with the subject of a story. The *subject* is what the story is about; as, for example, the affairs of John Smith, poor and hard-working, and his bride who keeps on with her job in a shop and soon earns more than her husband. The *theme* conveyed by this subject might be stated as: The wife who earns more than her husband loses his love. The story is focused on the theme.

The theme is the underlying idea, the aim, the implication of the plot; it is the proposition on which the plot is based; it is the backbone that sustains it. It is the truth that the story proves; it is the frame within which the story is pictured. It helps to give that logical coherence that makes the story a whole.

In some stories the plot arrangement naturally reveals the theme without any particular effort on the part of the writer. Or the writer may start with a theme and build a story about it, in which case he has a thematic story. If his theme is at all abstract, his story may be difficult to build because he must invent characters with traits selected to fit the theme; but when an important theme can be dramatically stressed, it makes the most impressive kind of a story. Naturally, the more important the theme, the more important the story.

A theme may be on the order of a thesis, such as: an unfriendly social environment warps character; or, it is better not to injure another than to be compelled to make costly amends; or, love of the land is the most potent influence in the life of a Chinese peasant; or, woman's need for romance makes her an undependable factor in business; or, a business man may sacrifice too much to ambition; or, the divorce of his parents adversely affects a child.

A theme must be susceptible of adaptation to modern life. "Woman's place is in the home" was the theme of many a serious problem story some decades ago, but it is meaningless today. Yet, as a rule, it is not the age of a theme or the number of times it has been used, but the application of it, that is important; and those themes are best which touch the general experience of mankind. They must be concrete and not abstract. "Love is the greatest thing in the world" may be a fine theme for a philosophic or inspirational dissertation, but it is insufficiently specific for the film story. You could not prove it in a photoplay; it is too universal in scope.

It is futile to regard the commercial screen play as the medium for the exploitation of various economic or political panaceas. Nor should a theme be designed for propaganda. The photoplay audience apparently does not want the theme which is based upon some individual theory or presumption, in spite of the fact that some playwrights, notably Shaw and Brieux, have been successful with such themes in stage plays.

Inasmuch as the theme always strengthens a story, it is fortunate that some theme is inherent in practically all story material. All the writer needs to do is to select and arrange his material to express it. Examine any good plot and you will find a theme imbedded in it; it is the theme that gives the plot objective and purpose. A plot that does not prove anything is diffused and uninteresting. It "doesn't get anywhere." As a matter of fact, a plot is merely the more or less mechanical invention that gives opportunity to the characters to portray a theme; and the theme keeps the story from being just a series of episodes concerning the same characters.

The theme rarely is mentioned in the story; it is never rubbed in. The audience may not put it in words at all, but it will recognize the theme and the fact that the story keeps in line with it. Suppose that you have taken for your theme the slogan, "It pays to advertise." These words may never be mentioned in the story, but the story itself will demonstrate the truth of that statement.

A theme may lend itself to presentation either as tragedy or comedy; as, for example, "Jealousy carries its own punishment." "That a wise man is out of place among fools" has been the theme of a number of comedies, and also of at least one powerful tragedy.

The theme which Sinclair Lewis definitely proved, and which certainly gave purpose to his *Main Street,* might be stated simply as, "the ugliness of life in a middlewestern town." The theme of *Sorrel and Son* by Warwick Deeping might be, "No sacrifice is too great for a father to make for a beloved son"; of *The Four Horsemen* by Ibanez, as "Want, disease, famine, and death forever follow war"; and that of *The Miracle Man,* "Spiritual regeneration is possible even in the worst of men." In *What Every Woman Knows,* the heroine reveals the theme: "Every man who is high up loves to think that he has done it all himself, and the wife smiles and lets it go at that. It's our only joke. Every woman knows that." In *Macbeth,* the theme might be the futility of satisfying ambition through murder. That "crime does not pay" is the point of many a gangster story. In Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court,* the theme is implied in the title. This is true, also, of *Love Is a Wonderful Thing, Bullets or Ballots, The Birth of a Nation, Cheating Cheaters.* Fable or legend has given themes for *Robin Hood, Peter Pan, The Vampire* and *Dracula.*

Proverbs, adages, maxims, parables and legends supply an amazing proportion of story themes. This, of course, is because they are full of profound meaning relating to human life. A proverb is a saying certified by the voices of generations, and the origin of many of those in use today is lost in the mists of antiquity. Thousands of years ago, men said significantly, "A fool and his money are soon parted"; "He who chases two hares catches neither"; "The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children"; "Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing."

"Proverbs," declared Isaac Disraeli in his *Amenities of Literature*, "embrace the wide sphere of human existence; they take all the colors of life; they are often exquisite strokes of genius; they delight by their airy sarcasm or their caustic satire, the luxuriance of their humor, the playfulness of their turn, and even by the elegance of their imagery, and the tenderness of their sentiment. They give a deep insight into domestic life and open for us the heart of man in all the various states he may occupy."

Proverbs record the thoughts of generations, the voice of the multitude, and they are found in all nations. The English say, "There is no proverb which is not true." The French say, "The maxims of men disclose their hearts." The Welsh declare, "The common sayings of the multitude are too true to be laughed at"; and the Arabs, "There is something wise in every proverb." Proverbs are so commonplace that it is not necessary to give them in entirety to have them recognized. It is taken for granted that everyone knows the second half of the proverbs indicated by the titles of these photoplays: *Early to Bed*, *Sauce for the Goose*, *A Fool and His Money*, *Where There's a Will.*

Because they were worked out by humanity itself after ages of experience proverbs offer much to the film-story writer. They are not epigrams, "wisecracks," words of the moment, but observations probably first voiced by the philosophic as being the things that life had impressed on them. How often in past centuries have the back-fence scandalmongers quoted with nodding heads, "Where there's smoke, there's always fire"—and had time prove them right?

The wisdom of the great religions of all races is expressed in maxims that touch all phases of life, business, health and matrimony, and have in them the germs of many a story with the stamp of authority. Themes based on these sayings have the advantage that the audience is in sympathy with them. "As ye sow so shall ye reap," has been a story theme from time immemorial.

There is wit and humor in these sayings of the common people: "He who makes himself a sheep will be devoured by the wolves"; "Marry in haste and repent at leisure"; "No fine clothes can hide a clown"; "Put a beggar on horseback and he will ride to the devil"; "When the cat's away the mice will play"; "Honey catches more flies than vinegar"; "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush"; "A rolling stone gathers no moss"—to which a modern generation has added, "But it gets a wonderful polish."

There is much philosophy in some brief adages. "The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine"; "He who is a fool at Christmas will not be wise by the first of May"; "Better poor with honor than rich with shame"; "A gem is not polished without rubbing, nor a man perfected without trials"; "Every man makes his own fate"; "Talking is easier than doing, and promising than performing"; "Catch not at the shadow and lose the substance."

The writer who views the world with a touch of cynicism will surely find a story to fit: "The laughter, the tears and the song of a woman may be equally deceptive"; "The husband who knows nothing, doubts nothing"; "The best friend often becomes the worst enemy"; or, "Pride sought flight in heaven, but fell to hell."

If he sees life optimistically, he may be able to use: "Fortune smiles upon the brave"; "Perseverance brings success"; "Content lodges oftener in cottage than palace"; "God sends thread to those who begin to weave."

These all are useful in suggesting additional themes to writers because they deal with some particular angle of known truth; and whenever a plot demonstrates some angle of truth it will be very likely to have wide appeal. These sayings are adaptable to expression in the terms of modern life. They never would have become proverbs if they had not been of general and lasting interest.

If you can stick to a theme, your story will have unity and purpose; and if you believe in it, it will have the very desirable element of sincerity. The theme ought to be broad enough to allow the building up of sufficient situations and an interesting climax and, as one object of the story is to prove the theme, it should be discernible before the story reaches the climax. Let the principal characters exemplify it.

When you are considering themes you may find food for thought in this passage written by Anton Chekhov in his *Letters:*

> Let me remind you that the writers who we say are for all time or are simply good, and who intoxicate us, have one common and very important characteristic: they are going toward something and are summoning you toward it, too, and you feel, not with your mind, but with your whole being, that they have some object, just like the ghost of Hamlet's father, who did not come and disturb the imagination for nothing. . . . And we? What of us?
>
> We paint life as it is, but beyond that—nothing at all. . . . We have neither immediate nor remote aims, and in our souls there is a great empty space. We have no politics, we do not believe in revolution, we have no God, we are not afraid of ghosts, and I personally am not afraid even of death and blindness. One who wants nothing, hopes for nothing, and fears nothing, cannot be an artist.

VI. DIALOGUE

Whatever his theme he will speak as becomes it; neither meagerly where it is copious, nor meanly where it is ample, not in this way where it demands that; but keeping his speech level with the actual subject and adequate to it.

—CICERO

THE wording of speech is never accidental; it is determined by the nature of the user and by his environment to the extent that he permits it to influence him. The choice of words betrays the speaker's character, education, mental and emotional stability, and his attitude toward life in general. A man to some extent must change his nature if he would consistently change his speech, and he who materially improves his speech has grown mentally.

People speak differently, very largely because they think differently. Not only the wording of dialogue but also its tempo depends on the education of the speaker and his emotional state at the time he is speaking. The bearer of tragic news who is stunned by shock will speak slowly and in very brief sentences. He who brings good news speaks quickly and will offer more explanation. The joyous speak rapidly; the angry speak jerkily and usually in short sharp sentences or phrases. In the most emotional moment of life, words are few; the truly grief-stricken have almost no words, and a man in love may be almost tongue-tied in the presence of his beloved. The strong-minded man or woman speaks firmly, while a person of weaker character may break his sentences with misplaced phrases, and a flutter-brain may insert a series of ejaculations in all his sentences. Age speaks more slowly than youth. The illiterate may never pause except for breath as they string many sentences together with "ands."

As applied to the film story, dialogue refers to speech addressed to some person or thing, or spoken in answer to something said by another character or characters. It is a waste of time to attempt to use it as a vehicle for declamation or preaching, or for expressing the personal views of the author on irrelevant subjects. The object of film-story dialogue is to convey to the audience such essential information, ideas and thoughts as cannot well be conveyed through action.

If a thought of any importance can be expressed in action, it is usually better to express it in action rather than speech. I recall a scene in which, as it was written, the heroine remarked in anger and scorn, "I wish you would get out!" As played, the heroine said nothing at all, but threw open the door and "glared" her visitor out of the room with far more dramatic value than the spoken line could have secured.

A discriminating selection of words is especially essential in the photoplay, because two words may use a foot of film, and also because the use of too much dialogue causes boredom. A character must be more than his words, his speech. Action very often is more truly revealing than words. It is just as well to keep in mind the fact that, for quite a while, the photoplay got along very well without any speech. For that matter, so did mankind, for language grew out of gesture, man's earliest mode of communication. The plot that is revealed largely through dialogue offers the camera very little while, on the other hand, some action without any dialogue helps to give the variety required for a dramatic effect.

Although dialogue, when necessary, may refer to things not to be shown in action, as a rule it should deal with the situation immediately before the audience. In fact, except in certain types of farce, dialogue should be considered as a concomitant of some action or event taking place at the time it is spoken. It ought not to constitute a dead end. If of any length, it should lead to some new event or situation. Let it be a bridge rather than a blind alley. Hamlet's advice to the players, "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action," is still sound. Action must carry the story, dialogue alone cannot do it, and all lines that do not serve whatever definite purpose the story is designed to achieve, are better omitted.

It is unwise to attempt to use dialogue or verbiage to plug holes in a plot. It should not be used even as padding unless the lines are exceptionally amusing or interesting and of wide appeal. Dialogue should be an inherent part of a scene, not something stuck onto a plot or story. It is a natural, almost inevitable, certainly inherent, part of it.

If the writer will keep in mind the feeling that is dominating the character at the time he speaks, this will suggest the proper wording of his lines and often the corresponding action. "If little fishes are made to talk, they should talk like little fishes and not like whales." Dialogue ordinarily should be as much in character as action or costume; and, theoretically, it should be so differentiated that a blind person could tell which character is speaking by the words and the way they are delivered.

The experienced writer recognizes the constant relation of personality to speech and he achieves creations with distinction and substance by giving to each the particular language that corresponds to the character he wishes to portray. He soon learns that it is impossible to write effective dialogue lines without a full understanding of the traits they are to express. While it is sometimes desirable to give a character certain catchwords or idiomatic expressions frequently repeated, such things cannot be depended on to characterize him. His entire speech must be peculiarly his own; his words must fit him as they fit no one else. The writer must know a great deal about his plot actors before he can determine their natural mode of speech. Whether or not the language shall be marked with correctness and precision depends entirely on what kind of a person is to be represented, but all lines should be expressive and effective. Ordinarily, spontaneity and vitality are more important than grammar and style.

Each art, each profession, each trade, in fact, nearly every occupation, has its own idiom. Vocation, class and environment generally are revealed in speech. The person who habitually refers to his children as "kiddies," to his family as "the folks," to his car as "the bus," in so doing tells us considerable of himself and his status.

One frequently noticeable defect in dialogue is the use of sentence construction and words not in keeping with the social class represented. Characters who have no opportunities for education or culture speak with amazingly correct English; or those who presumably are cultured use slipshod and careless phrasing, or the philosopher and the unthinking speak in the same tempo, with the result that the characterization loses the distinction that it easily might have had. Writers sometimes seem to forget that people are not born with the ability to speak correct English. No matter how lovable or noble a person may be, if he has had no opportunity to learn or to hear correct language, he will not speak it. Dialogue should be graded according to the class, environment and education of the speakers.

Dialogue may be too pedantic not only because the words selected are too formal, but because the speech is too long or because it is too unidiomatic, or lacks a touch of colloquialism, or because it has no connection with the action that is going on.

Unless they are intended as pedants, or persons whose speech is marked by some degree of formality, characters should use more or less colloquial language that usually cuts its lines to the bone. Not, "What have we for supper?" but, "What we got for supper?" Not, "Are you going to go?" but, "You going?"

Slang is always dated; each expression came into popularity at a particular period and it should not be used as the natural speech of characters of other times. Localisms and provincialisms that mean something in one part of the country and are not generally understood without explanation have no place in dialogue, for unfamiliar words and phrases are distracting and confusing. Natives of rural areas in Maine and in Texas, for example, find each other's speech peculiar and difficult. The dialogue used in some stage plays would be unintelligible to an important section of the motion-picture audience. Whenever a character must use technical or unusual terms, their meaning must be made plain.

To say that it is essential to individualize speech does not mean that the character shall speak a particular dialect unless the use of that dialect is an essential part of the characterization. Where dialect or patois is desired, a more pleasing effect is obtained by suggesting it; that is, by using typical phrases rather than by bringing every word into the dialect form. Of course, pronunciation and accent have much to do with dialect, but it is the recognition of the foreign sentence construction underlying the dialect, the language or the patois, that makes possible the most telling effect.

"Ah, no, lassie! You'll no leave the castle this night!" is recognizably Scottish, but there is only one Scottish word in it. Weirdly misspelled words may produce, when spoken, nothing like the effect intended by the author.

The foreign nationality of an educated character may be indicated by using English words arranged in the idiomatic structure common to the particular foreign language that is to be suggested, and by infrequent interpolation of foreign expletives and ejaculations, the meaning of which is unimportant or else easily recognizable. If, however, the setting and characters are entirely foreign, the dialogue should be written entirely in English.

A story with a British background requires the English usage in its spoken lines, but there is no excuse for using the English "lift," "goods-wagon," "green grocer," and so on in an Ameriman picture. French phrases and words, even although they are almost naturalized into the English language, should be avoided if there is any doubt that they will be generally understood.

I think it was August Thomas who first said, "A line must advance the story, develop character or get a laugh. If it does any one of these things, it is a good line; if it does two of these things, it is a fine line; if it does all three, it is a great line."

Dialogue necessary to advance the story usually occurs to the writer as he outlines his plot. Dialogue to develop character requires (besides a knowledge of the individual who is to speak) the connecting of characteristic speech to some particular action that is taking place. Dialogue may get a laugh because it is witty in expression, because of its unusual relation to the action, or because it is deliberately and ludicrously out of character.

When speech is inserted to give information that an audience must have if it is to understand the plot, it is best to give it in a few lines so connected with preceding dialogue that it does not appear forced. If such lines are worded with due regard for the character speaking them, they will be so integrated as to appear quite natural. It is advisable sometimes to have the information given a second time by a different character and in different wording, or to have the information commented upon in such a way that it is recalled to the attention of the audience.

Dialogue, as well as action, is a means for the display of emotion. Let each speech, so far as possible, be some particular kind of speech: angry, joyous, passionate, fervent, weary, discouraged, hopeful, cattish, sneering, jealous. Some of the feeling should inhere in the words themselves; for words in themselves may suggest emotion, and they vary in intensity. The writer of dialogue will be especially repaid if he studies words to determine their connotation, that is, their association sense, their symbolic fringe as well as their meaning, and if he learns to use to his advantage those words that have strong associative values. "Home" means more than "house"; "mother," more than "woman."

Even the structure of a sentence may be expressive of emotion, e.g., the unfinished or broken sentence used by the nervous or frightened. Increasing emotion often manifests itself in quickened breathing which in turn induces the use of shorter sentences.

The writer's first consideration should be to see that his lines are clear in meaning. When he is certain of the thought he wishes to convey, he then can clothe it in colorful and interesting words. Film story dialogue, however, cannot be as verbose as speech is in real life. Actual conversation as a rule is too dull, too repetitious, too broken, too incoherent, as well as too unimportant. Its wordiness at times would slow action and destroy any dramatic effect that the scene otherwise might achieve. Dialogue intended for the photoplay is best selected when it hits only the high spots. It is not ordinary conversation; it is very discriminatingly selected conversation. It has the appearance of being natural, but it is far from being exactly like that used in life.

Dialogue that is effective in a stage play may not be so in a photoplay. The stage play is adapted to the limitations imposed by the walls of the stage. Speech is its most important form of expression and if the lines are good they will carry a play even though it be deficient in action. The stage uses speech for its own sake, but the screen cannot do so without giving the effect of artificiality. The "conversation piece" has no place on the screen.

Long speeches in the film story often suggest that the author has not worked out his plot sufficiently; that he is *telling* of events and situations that should be shown as they occurred. When spoken, long speeches are apt to stop the movement of the story and to sound too formal. Diffuseness in dialogue may constitute no barrier to the sale of a novel, but it definitely will hamper that of a film story. Consider the length of the speeches in the photoplays you see and you will be surprised to find how short they are. One of the few very successful long speeches that I remember was that given by a character in the photoplay made from Irving Cobb's *Judge Priest*. Its success was largely owing to the splendid delivery of the veteran actor, Henry Walthall. Moreover, it was part of a tense courtroom scene, and was interestingly composed.

Generally speaking, short lines have more dramatic value than long ones. Economy of words makes for pungent dialogue, just as ejaculations are needed to express any intensity of mental stress. But short sentences need not be choppy or jerky unless that particular effect is desired. They may be interspersed with longer ones to give dialogue that runs more smoothly. The photoplay version of *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* had pleasing examples of the laconic and concise language used by men under stress.

Smart dialogue is rarely as effective as is characteristic dialogue. Witty lines may have their basis in the amusing possibilities suggested by the traits of the characters, but care should be used in repeating funny tags or expressions. What is funny or touching when heard for the first time, is less so on second hearing and rarely at all on the third. One funny situation or "bit of business" is worth three line gags. In life, few persons use speech entirely composed of "wise cracks." Therefore, too many funny lines destroy the effect of reality. The insertion of "gags" is best left to studio gag men who know how to get laughs and, theoretically at least, know how to get them in the right places and at the right time.

Let your story make clear the way the lines are to be expressed and interpreted. To write, "She made an angry retort," or "He replied bitterly," is by no means expressing feeling in speech. It is an attempt to put the burden on the actor or continuity writer when it really is the writer's job to give the words that belong to the emotional state he wishes to present. If you wish to maintain tension, keep the ends of your lines emphatic and important. This is not a matter for the actor's voice; it refers to the wording of the lines. A line that drops at the end may let the attention of the audience drop with it. Put the most important words at the end of a sentence, and the most important news at the end of a speech.

Inasmuch as most dialogue gives information, its location in the story is important. A line may be much more effective in one scene than in another.

If the plot permits, it is well to give the names of important characters in the dialogue of the first sequence in order that the spectators may identify them. In the written story, label the dialogue lines with the speaker's name or by the use of some identifying phrase. While the characters may be easily identified in the photoplay by the audience, they very rarely can be identified solely by their lines in the manuscript. It is hard to make a writer, who knows his characters by heart, believe how difficult it is for a reader to keep track of unlabeled dialogue when there are only two speakers; it is practically impossible to do it when there are more than two. If the context fails to identify the speakers, the story editor is unlikely to bother to sort them out. It is easier to turn to another manuscript.

Remember that the attention of the audience always follows the person who is speaking, and that the greater share of dialogue should be given to the most important character. Always turn the dialogue so that it may give the hero or heroine the advantage unless the lines happen to be a bit intended for the benefit of some "character" part. Even where a secondary character is required to bring in information, it can be so drawn from him by the principal that the latter holds the attention of the audience upon himself. By giving the secondary character frequent, even if very short speeches, the dialogue will not seem too one-sided. The necessity of developing and holding a bond of sympathy between the principal and the audience demands that there be nothing in his lines that will swing the sympathy of the audience too far from him.

Finally, certain physical factors, including acoustics, require consideration. Too many sibilants and combinations that produce a hissing or whistling are to be avoided. Accidental poetic rhythm or lines that run together, or those which produce a sing-song rhythm or swing, are to be shunned, and so is noticeable alliteration or any combination of letters or words that invites slips of the tongue. Names that have the same vowel sound or that are too much alike may be difficult for an audience to distinguish. I have seen dialogue that took no consideration of the fact that an actor must breathe. Phrases and sentences never need to be so long that the speaker's breath must be held unduly to complete them without a natural break.

It is said that the best dialogue is that written spontaneously, but it is certain that one writes dialogue spontaneously only after long experience. The tyro, as a rule, must work over his dialogue as he does his plot, building, cutting and revising it until he secures the effect he desires. After dialogue has been written out in full, it will pay to make an effort to condense it. Over-elaboration is a common fault and the unnecessary word or phrase in a line is like sand in machinery. Let the dialogue be underdone rather than overdone. It is possible to secure brevity by lopping off superfluous words, but more often rephrasing or changing the construction of the line will give a better result. This is not to say that the briefest line is always the best. Thought must not be clouded with words, but there must be enough to express it fully. And the more ability you have to select expressive, colorful words, the more apt will you be to get your dialogue across to those who read it. It is well to remember that the spoken language differs considerably from the written language. Speech which is effective when read may not be effective at all when spoken by an actor, and for this reason it is advisable to read film-story dialogue aloud in order that it may be checked for the effect it will have on the ear.

VII. DRAMATURGY

Fiction—if it at all aspires to be art—must appeal to temperament. And in truth it must be, like painting, like music, like all art, the appeal of one temperament to all the other innumerable temperaments whose subtle and resistless power endows passing events with their true meaning, and creates the moral, the emotional atmosphere of the place and time. Such an appeal to be effective must be an impression conveyed through the senses; and, in fact, it cannot be made in any other way, because temperament, whether individual or collective, is not amenable to persuasion.

All art, therefore, appeals primarily to the senses, and the artistic aim when expressing itself in written words must also make its appeal through the senses, if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions. It must strenuously aspire to the plasticity of sculpture, to the color of painting, and to the magic suggestiveness of music.

—JOSEPH CONRAD, "NOTES ON LIFE AND LETTERS"

A SENSE of reality in fiction writing is not derived from copying or reporting the narrow segment of life that can actually be observed by the individual. Facts serve the story writer only as suggestions. The greatest stories are very largely products of imagination, and one essential for the writer is the ability to realize experience imaginatively.

The writer of film stories, at least one who writes for the American motion-picture studios, is not concerned with imitating life. His job is to probe beneath the surface and to interpret its essential human qualities, to clarify "the lessons of life"; to select interesting situations and to "highlight" them. It is more than a report of experience that is required; it is a presentation of it in such a way that other persons may seem to experience it too. The story must bring the experience to them. It is not the *actual* truth or falsity of a situation that is important, but its *apparent* truth or falsity. Truth is not nearly as essential as dramatic value. Actual realism may be as dull as ditchwater.

A successful photoplay may appear to have a very simple plot; its actors may seem to be entirely natural in word and action. Actually, this illusion of reality is the result of a very discriminating selection of situations, action and speech, all expressed in the most dramatic fashion. Apparently an imitation of life, it really is a particularly exciting, deftly colored and emotion-arousing interpretation. Much is added to, and something omitted from, almost any situation taken from life; yet the picture presented is entirely recognizable. Few situations in real life stand out as clearly as do photoplay scenes, and this is as it should be. For all art, in the last analysis, must be something more than an imitation, a photographic likeness; the reality that it presents must be the reality of its *underlying truth* whether it is a depiction of life as it is, as it might be, or as we wish it were.

The point, after all, is not whether situation or character is true to life, but whether or not the audience will accept it as such. "Prefer," said Aristotle, "an impossibility which seems probable to a probability that seems impossible." And probability and the illusion of reality lie in the careful selection of line and act.

It is important to distinguish between those more superficial appearances, those particular and individual details that we call facts, and the fundamental laws of nature, human and otherwise, that are of universal import. For example, a certain woman loses her life in saving her child from danger. That is a statement of fact; the underlying truth is—that mother love is stronger than love of life. The story that expresses some fundamental truth always has an element of greatness that is not found in the purely factual story.

In one sense, the film story must be more credible than real life. That is, it must have more warrant for its truth; it must satisfy reason. But the writer is given one advantage: his opening premise is always accepted. If he starts with a depiction of fairyland or some mythical kingdom, or a world to come, no matter how fantastic it may be, the audience will accept it as real for the duration of the photoplay and will expect the situations and actions to be credible only in relation to the premise. The audience's contribution to the photoplay is its willingness to adopt the spirit of make-believe; to express more credulity than it does in real life; and to be strongly partisan regarding the characters. The more credible the story is, however, the more completely will the audience associate itself with its circumstances.

Some of our modern novelists and short-story writers believe that reality is conveyed by expressing only a character's emotional response to life, by showing the circumstances that involve him solely as he sees them through the distorted lens of his own feeling rather than as they occur. Since feeling is frequently irrational, the picture so presented will lack rationality. This psychological realism has no place in the film story. The film story demands an objective humanistic realism which depicts man not only as mind or soul, but also as body. What man does must be more fully presented than what man thinks.

Plot weaves together a sequence of significant situations. Dramatic value is developed by adding those factors that touch, impress or thrill an audience; that make a serious situation more tragic, or more dangerous; that make a sin blacker, a crime more terrible, a betrayal more dastardly, a love more true and deep, a sacrifice more unselfish, a loyalty stronger, an act of courage more heroic.

A biography may tell the story of a man's rise from poverty to fame and wealth. It will undoubtedly have dramatic situations in it, but it will not be dramatic in the sense that the photoplay must be. Emphasis on some strong desire and some strong opposition to it is required. Weaken either, and you lessen the dramatic value; strengthen either, and you increase it. Actually, conflict always is between two wills or between a human will and some impersonal force. The protagonist then, necessarily, must be a person of strong will, otherwise there can be no struggle of importance or intensity. The strength of will expressed largely determines the degree of emotion that develops.

Drama in a plot requires some compulsion, some sense of necessity. By certain circumstances, preferably induced by his own traits, the protagonist must be compelled to take action, but his actions should appear to be of his own choice and not obviously assigned to him by his creator. An appearance of volition gives him greater reality. This is partly a matter of acting; but in the story itself the writer should give the protagonist a chance to sway, apparently, between two decisions. The sense of drama is increased if no clue is given to what he will decide to do. If a character never seems to make any decisions the audience will lose interest in him, for it is all too clear that the author has worked out a series of situations which the character must go through willy-nilly; and while, of course, this is the truth, the audience much prefers to be encouraged in the illusion that the characters are free to do as they will. If it appears that the character has no choice at any point in the story, there is no drama. Also, the less opportunity for decision, the weaker the character.

"A play," said Professor George Pierce Baker, "is the shortest distance from emotion to emotion." That is why heart interest is essential to drama. Many a writer who is clever at constructing plots fails because there is nothing in his work that touches the heart; there is nothing that arises from deep feeling; no sense of humanity. There are writers, also, whose claim to fame has arisen almost entirely through the expression in their writings of their great and genuine compassion for mankind.

The value of sincerity in creating heart interest in a story was evident in *Captains Courageous.* In this picture honesty and sincerity developed a heart-touching interest that no amount of glamorous artificiality could have secured. The entire picture was keyed to the natural simplicity of a boy and of a hardworking fisherman who taught him much that made life worthwhile. No striving for sensational effect nor for tawdry sentiment was allowed to mar the integrating fidelity of the picture, and audiences inevitably recognized its worth.

A photoplay must have dramatic situations that will arouse a definite emotion or feeling and this feeling must be of sufficient strength to make the spectator for the time being forget everything but what he sees and hears on the screen. Story material in itself may or may not be dramatic, but nearly all material can be presented dramatically. It becomes dramatic whenever it arouses an emotional response. *An action or an event is not dramatic in itself, but an action or event plus the specific feeling that caused it, or is caused by it, is the basis of drama.* Wooden-faced comedians utilize this principle to achieve a ludicrous incongruity, by acting as if there were no feeling, no emotion attached to anything that they do. And so do those comedians who deliberately use an inappropriate emotion and play a ridiculous role with intense seriousness.

Here are a few "dont's."

Do not confuse the *portrayal* of emotion with drama. It is not enough that the characters use speech or action that indicates their own emotion. A weeping woman may touch the heart of an audience, or bore it, or rouse it to laughter, depending on the circumstances that cause her tears. Dramatic value induces the spectator to respond emotionally to the emotion presented by the actors. The writer should aim to make the audience weep or rejoice with his actors; and to secure this emotional reaction, their struggle must be sufficiently intense. Let them range the heights of happiness and the depths of misery so that strong contrasts are gained.

Do not show emotion as something static; drama demands change. The principal figure in a story must change his mental position as a result of the events of the plot; the story must not leave him mentally and emotionally just where he was at the start. If he was brutal at the beginning, he must be either kind or broken at the end.

If a character is to be killed or otherwise removed from the scene before the end of the story, do not at any point let him arouse the sympathy of the audience too much. If he does, the story will end, as far as the audience is concerned, when he dies or leaves. In a murder mystery, the person murdered should not be allowed to arouse as much interest as does the detective. He should be made either colorless or else somewhat deserving of his end.

The cause of the emotion should be clear before the emotion is displayed. As the psychologists express it, "Other things being equal, no concrete image should be suggested until the materials out of which it is made have been presented." The writer without technical experience occasionally shows a character in a rage, then later shows the cause. At the time the character exhibits the rage the audience is ignorant as to why he does it; and by the time they realize what made him rage, the effect of his emotion is lost. If a photoplay requires emphasis to be placed on a motor accident, instead of showing a group of persons on a sidewalk registering fright and horror, and then showing a man pinned under an auto, it is best first to show the approaching auto with the driver registering alarm and an effort to stop, and the frightened pedestrian directly in the path of the car. Then show the shocked group on the sidewalk and, having held the suspense this long, show the man as he lay after being struck by the car. All of this can be presented in a very few words in the story.

By a rule seemingly as old as drama itself, gesture comes before the speech referring to it. Not, "Take that!" before the missile flies, but the throwing of the missile followed by, "Take that!" The reason is that the eye is quicker than the ear. While this is perhaps more a matter for the continuity writer and director than for the film-story writer, the latter will do well to think of his stories in the same manner as do those concerned with the screening.

Drama must be consistent in mood. Tragedy must not swing into farce; comedy must not become tragedy. An audience resents being required to change its mood. A notable example of inconsistent mood was seen in *Captain Blood*. The first scenes pictured searing cruelty that must have left ineradicable marks upon the chief character if he were at all human; yet the photoplay ended in an almost frivolous atmosphere and depicted such a casual attitude on the part of Captain Blood toward the man who had deliberately caused him terrible suffering that many persons who saw the picture resented it as insultingly incredible. There was insufficient motive for such an ending.

In addition, consistency of atmosphere and action is essential. The atmosphere of a photoplay, its particular charm, may remain with those who saw it even after they have forgotten the actual scenes. Atmosphere always depends on the spirit, on the particular significance of the place and time, and it may play almost as much of a role as any plot actor. Depressing solitude, debilitating heat, oppressive mountain heights, may reasonably influence character or action. Nature herself may exhibit a specific mood: may be weird, grim, happy, sinister, or beautiful and inspiring, all at the behest of an author who knows how to manipulate words. *White Cargo, Rain, Tobacco Road,* owe much to a definite atmosphere consistently presented. In *Cavalcade,* two characters are seen embracing each other on the deck of a liner. As they step apart, the audience sees that on a life-preserver, which their figures heretofore have hidden, is the name of the doomed *Titanic.* Here is a very short but impressive episode that brings the audience immediately in accord with the mood of the scenes to follow.

While atmosphere is largely a matter for the director, who often understands pictorial composition in the same sense as the painter and sculptor, the writer who can suggest it briefly and effectively has just that much greater advantage. Atmospheric impression may be destroyed by lack of unity between location and the action and dialogue. There is little bond, for example, between a majestic or stately setting and characters whose speech and action reveal nothing of dignity; and though the members of an audience may not be able to tell wherein the fault lies, many of them will be conscious of it.

A coherent story has a particular mood or tone throughout; it is sad or gay, impressive or light. There may be variations of mood in the situations, but these will be of less intensity than the mood which pervades the entire story. It may have both pathos and humor, but it must be definitely a story of one or the other. They cannot be balanced.

While unity of action and unity of purpose are essential, the classic unities of time and place need not be adhered to in the film story. Nevertheless, in spite of the mobility possible on the screen, it often is best to concentrate interest on a few locations rather than to diffuse it among many. Too many time lapses are disturbing and a very long lapse, or one too greatly stressed, may give the effect of two stories instead of one.

Nor does the screen story, like the short story, call for a single emotional effect. Advisedly, it should achieve a succession of emotional effects, yet one must predominate noticeably over all the others so that there is a unity of impression. And no scene should drop entirely out of the emotional mood that distinguishes the story.

The film story must make its effect more sharply and more quickly than the usual short story or novel, therefore it must have a greater degree of structural unity; it must be *one* thing. There should be no parts that can be lifted out bodily without affecting the story. Structural unity requires that the film story have one purpose: that plot, theme, character, setting and emotion be built into a single formation; that sequences follow one another in one continuous undulating movement; that the apparently contradictory, the usual and the unusual, be harmonized; that everything convey a sense of progress toward a given end. Unity demands that the strange, the dreadful, the ludicrous, the magnificent, the almost impossible, be woven into the common easily recognizable detail of normal life so that they shall be one, and so that that which is common shall carry that which is not, just as a character needs normal form and the common characteristics of mankind in addition to any exceptional qualifications he may possess. Unity also requires a rounding-out of each personality and of his particular world and its customs.

An understanding of integration (the formation of the whole from constituent parts) and of coherence (that sticking-together due to a common principle or relationship) as applied to the film story will go far toward a writer's success. A successful director may never have studied unity or coherence, but he knows when a story lacks them and he knows that he must have them. This is true even though a few studio executives still demand photoplays crowded with irrelevant stuff under the mistaken idea that sheer variety increases the chances of success.

It has been said that art consists very largely in the suppression of non-essentials. Compression improves scene, sequence, and plot, as well as single sentence and paragraph. Emphasis draws the attention to important factors; it brings into vivid relief those factors that deal with the purpose of the story. In the written story, emphasis is secured by the location of a situation, by the length of it, by the stress of its action, by repetition of some act or phrase, by contrast of personality or mood, or by the introduction of some particular action in such a manner as to lead the audience to believe it to be of great importance—just as the approach of a dignitary is preceded by heralds and a fanfare of trumpets. In *Anna Christie*, repeated references to "dat old davil, sea!" helped to emphasize an impersonal antagonist.

In connection with emphasis, it may be noted that where a physical property is to play an important role in some situation, it should be called to the attention of the spectators beforehand and they should be made sufficiently familiar with it so that it does not take their attention from the scene in which it is used. If, in a final scene, the protagonist is to be shot, the audience should know beforehand that a gun is available. A common device is to show it in a desk drawer that is opened for some other purpose, or to show a plot actor buying it, or putting it in his pocket. When the shooting occurs, the spectator's attention is held on the shooting rather than on the fact that a weapon appears. It is sometimes assumed that the continuity writer or director will attend to such matters, but the experienced writer knows that attention to just such detail strengthens his story.

Startling contrast used to increase some particular impression may be contrast in character and emotional reaction, contrast between cause and effect, contrast in situation, or contrast between the normal and the abnormal. In the *School for Scandal*, the traits of the hypocrite, Joseph, are sharpened by contrast with those of the good-natured if reckless Charles. The photoplay audience wants no subtle gradations, but sharp and definite contrast that it cannot fail to notice.

Suspense on the part of an audience is a compound of curiosity and sympathy. The moment that it loses interest in what happens to the personalities involved, or the moment its curiosity is satisfied, it no longer knows suspense. But a story that merely arouses curiosity and then satisfies it will not please many movie-goers. They seek also to be stirred by an emotional conflict. They want suspense that arises from the strong appeal of a likeable character in a difficult or dangerous situation that arouses their sympathy for him. Suspense is emotional tenseness, and there can be no tenseness until the principal character has won the favor of the audience. He must appeal to it sufficiently to cause it to be intensely interested in his actions or his fate. The characters, the motives, and the point of the struggle, therefore, must be clearly understood by the spectator before suspense can develop. Suspense arises when the audience fears that the character will not get something it wishes him to have, when it is really concerned as to whether the hero is going to get out of his appalling predicament. It will not experience suspense if it has no real liking for him.

Since both sympthy and curiosity depart as soon as the audience knows that what it desires is going to happen, it should be kept in doubt until the end of the picture, and the uncertainty must be sufficient to induce a state of tension.

In the grim melodrama, *Fury,* strong suspense develops because of the curiosity of the spectators to know whether the likeable protagonist, wrongly supposed to be dead, is or is not going to cause a group of persons to be imprisoned or executed for his murder.

In *To Mary, With Love,* a less tense but very effective suspense is induced by making the audience curious to know whether or not the husband ever will be able to lift himself out of his dissipation and whether or not the devoted friend will continue to be nothing more than that.

Usually it is advisable for the amateur writer to depend on the proper arrangement of this plot material, plus the depiction of motivation, to build up expectancy rather than to try to develop suspense at the possible sacrifice of a logical interpretation of the events. If there is no real crisis in the story, there is nothing on which to build suspense. If a story plot has drama at all, it has places where suspense naturally arises and where it easily can be intensified. If the plot has no drama, it is useless as a basis for a film story.

By keeping the spectator curious, suspense may be maintained and held over between incidents, but it does not pay to trick him. You may tease an audience, tantalize it, postpone giving it the dénouement and it will be happy; but it will resent being tricked or cheated. If you begin your plot with a promise of a murder, you must give the murder or furnish an entirely convincing reason for not doing so.

Like coincidence, suspense has its use and misuse. Suspense that would be the normal concomitant of a situation may be heightened slightly by making the situation more dramatic or by inserting "plants" that arouse curiosity. But suspense should not be aroused without justification, so that reader or audience waits in vain for some situation or action equal to the suspense that has been developed. When important information that should be given is left out of a story, unwarranted suspense may arise and the story fall flat because the suspense thus engendered has no relation to the action. Again, unjustifiable suspense may develop when the writer drags red herrings in the shape of irrelevant episodes across the trail of his main story.

Suspense may be increased by temporarily withholding some piece of information; but this is so rarely done well, and news that some character should have is so often withheld, that I hesitate to recommend the device. A character may not be aware of who or what is fighting against him, but the audience must know, and it probably will wait in some suspense to see his reaction when he finds out. In the detective story the audience must be given all the information concerning the crime that the sleuth possesses.

Suspense may be induced by ending a scene on a dramatic note as is done in the serial story, or by bringing in the secondary line of interest and then returning to the main scene —the interruption, of course, being one that appears to be natural at the time and place. In connection with the development of suspense, and in fact throughout the film story, it is well to remember that the mind will not give close attention to more than one thing at a time, nor will it give attention to even one thing for long unless it is something that offers sufficient variety and change to hold interest. Suspense can be over-sustained to the point of weariness and boredom.

Fast or violent action is not essential to the creation of suspense. A mother sitting by the side of her sick child, a prisoner waiting in the dock for the verdict of the jury, a wife waiting at a hospital to hear the result of an operation on her husband, may arouse in the audience something of the suspense which the human mind normally feels when facing such situations.

Movie-goers, as a rule, are imaginative only along a certain few lines, and because of this limitation it is possible for the film story plot to offer surprise twists. Whenever you can surprise an audience, so much the better; provided, of course, that the surprise involves nothing outside the bounds of probability. It must arise from a relationship of elements that logically belongs to the plot and must be natural under the particular circumstances. It should not be suggested or hinted beforehand, or it loses its value. Surprise is always relative. It may be some simple event that is astonishing only because of the setting or the character involved.

Properly integrated comedy growing out of character often can be used to provide some pleasing element of surprise, but it must not hold up the action, nor should it be allowed to win the attention of reader and audience from the plot. The trick surprise that suddenly reveals to them that they have been hoodwinked generally prevents further consideration of the story. They stop to run back over the plot to see what misled them. Along this line, it is wise to beware of "comedy relief" in the form of irrelevant gags, wisecracks, and more or less funny action that draws attention from the drama inherent in the plot. A "running gag," that is, some characteristic and amusing bit of business repeated with discretion, may be advantageously employed in any story where a touch of comedy may be effective. For example, in *Three Smart Girls,* the little girl, "Penny," finds herself biting her fingernails whenever she is worried. The audience laughs sympathetically when at last, in bed at night and still worrying about her father, she is driven to encase her hands in gloves. In *Love Is News,* a busy editor frequently is called to the telephone by an evidently talkative woman who never appears in the picture. The harassed man hastily replies, "Yes, Mabel," and leaves the receiver lying on his desk. Occasionally, as his work permits, he sends another "Yes, Mabel," into the mouthpiece, and this intermittent and possibly irrelevant response to the continuous cackling over the telephone is so effective that it is allowed to run through the picture until the final fade-out.

Every form of art requires some form of pattern and rhythm in its presentation and the screen story is no exception. This does not refer to the rhythm of the prose in which the story is expressed, but to the rhythm of its action. It refers to the symmetry of the movement of the story and to the pleasing recurrence of something accented in it. The patterned recurrence of features designed to give a certain mood will produce a rhythm of action. And a pleasing alternation of scenes and speeches of long or short duration, usually a matter for the film editor, may give a screen play a pleasing swing. You may have noticed in some photoplays a certain jerkiness, in others a disturbing "jazzing" of the action or a perceptible dragging. The writer who becomes conscious of the rhythm, the swing, of a good story will see the necessity for making his action smoothly continuous and undisturbed by irrelevant breaks or matter.

Pace and rhythm should not be confused. Either a fast, action story or a slow, tragic story might have a jerky rhythm or a smooth pleasantly modulated plot movement. The pace of the action should be adapted to the theme and mood of the story. Stirring action may gallop so rapidly as to weary an audience, or it may not give time for its meaning to be comprehended. As has been pointed out, the action in a film story must be faster than in any other type of fiction; but the romantic story, the psychological story, the story that is deeply tragic and the story featuring some gently philosophic character, usually require a medium pace. The idealistic love story may need an even slower tempo. Comedies and detective stories require fast action; it is fatal to let them drag; and the more melodramatic a plot is, the faster should be its pace. Pace, in this connection, refers not to the movement of the actors, but to the speed of the plot action. It is largely a matter for a director, but the writer should be aware of it and he will see the improvement that can be effected in a story by interspersing fast and slow action in a pleasing pattern of alternation. Slowing the action sometimes brings out its significance and makes it seem important. Action that seems to be moving too rapidly may be slowed by the use of dialogue.

Time in the mind of the audience has little to do with time as reckoned by the clock. The beholder receives an impression of time from the *quality* of the scene; a tragic scene may be precisely the foot-length of a comic one, but it will seem to run twice as long. A scene with nothing of new interest appears to take more time than a scene involving novelty. Any lessening of interesting action slows up the time as far as the audience is concerned. Action speeds time; lack of action slows it; and anything serious is naturally slower and heavier than that which is light and gay.

In the photoplay, the actual passage of time, or the events of a considerable period, may be shown by a series of short scenes that are *representative* of the time to be covered. If, for example, the childhood of a character has some importance in connection with the plot, it may be pictured in short quick scenes showing him in a very few significant circumstances as a small child, as a school-boy, and as a young man. By thus presenting representative moments, the essence of the entire period is expressed. In the written story, the same effect is achieved by describing a few significant episodes of the period.

If the time lapse has in itself nothing important to the plot, the writer need do nothing more than state that so many years, months or days passed, and leave it for the continuity writer, who prepares the story for photographing, to use cuts for the break or, in case of a lapse covering years, to show symbolically something that conveys the idea of the passage of time, such as a page from history, newspaper headlines relating to events with which most persons are familiar, the changes of fashions in clothes or modes of travel, or the obvious aging of the characters. In the charming film version of Barrie's *Quality Street*, the words "ten years later" appear on the screen and break the action far less than would a more elaborate effort to convey the lapse of years.

For shorter periods, clocks, calendars, sunrise and sunset, winter and summer, and the use of the ordinary events of life that have time significance may be used. Breakfast, for example, suggests morning to most persons. But remember that whatever scene is injected to convey the illusion of time, it must also carry on the plot. Give an audience an intensely absorbing story and it will accept whatever is suggested concerning the passing of time. It may be a few hours, or weeks, months, years, decades, or aeons—if it can be done interestingly in a story that can be shown in the ninety minutes allowed for the average photoplay.

An understanding of dramatic composition requires an understanding of the elements of tragedy and of comedy. It is insufficient to think of tragedy in drama merely as something serious or as that which depicts calamity. More strictly speaking, pure tragedy should convey the impression of sublimity, of nobility, and should arouse not only intense pity for the suffering character, but a sense of awe. It requires that the principal character be brought to a catastrophic end through some passion or defect in himself. In the earlier days of drama the motivating force was Fate or the gods, or some power over which man had no hope of control.

Tragedy in its highest sense must be something inevitable, something from which the sufferer cannot escape because he is conditioned, is inhibited, by his own nature. In tragedy as a dramatic form, emphasis is on the characters rather than on the plot, and it demands men and women of powerful will and intellect, creatures good or evil, but with certain godlike qualities so that their fall seems all the more devastating because of their possibilities. All the heroes and heroines of Shakespeare's tragedies are persons of large capacities.

With its fatal ending, straight tragedy must be exceptionally impressive to succeed in photoplay representation. (Even at its best it can scarcely hope for the financial success that attended, for example, *It Happened One Night.*) In the film story, the "heroic act" that is the basis of tragic drama may be very simple, in all probability it will lack grandeur, but it must above all things be sincere and linked to some common element in man's experience. It should be noted also that the effect of heroism is no criterion of its quality, since that relates to the effort, not to the result. Tragedy degenerates to melodrama when the cause of the calamity is artificial or insignificant, and it may become sentimental for the same reason.

A touch of tragedy is a valuable aid in securing emotional response. It is bearable because it arouses no fear for ourselves. We are conscious that we are safely outside of whatever misfortune it presents, and there is a gratifying sense of relief when it is displaced by some more pleasing factor. To many persons, possibly because of their particular outlook, tragedy conveys a greater sense of reality than does comedy. Writers seeking realism often write into their film stories exaggerated scenes of poverty, degeneracy, crime and suffering, and the tragic consequences that these evils may produce, with the result that their stories are as false as those of the romanticists who seek to gloss over all that is unpleasant. It cannot be too often stated that the photoplay audiences want to see misery only in contrast with happiness. Light is preferable to darkness, although some darkness is necessary to bring out the full value of light. Instinctively, the human mind turns away from the unpleasant, and too stark tragedy has the effect of inducing the audience to steel itself against its own emotion, to withdraw its interest deliberately.

Many members of the movie audiences find their only release from a drab and sordid life through a temporary escape into the illusory world of the screen. Here they see themselves in the story and naturally want to experience in it a more satisfactory life than their own. That is why pathos that rouses a more evanescent pity, a more tender sorrow, receives greater welcome than stark tragedy. Incidentally, tragedy is easier to write than comedy because tragedy is universally understood.

The bond between an audience and a character undergoing great suffering must be strongly sympathetic. We can laugh at a person who is funny even if we have no interest in the person himself, but we cannot be greatly touched by anyone's suffering unless we have some feeling for him as well as a realization of what he is undergoing. Tragedy always varies with the personal equation. If a relative or close friend is the victim of a slight accident, we are apt to be greatly concerned; while even murder, if it involves a stranger, draws our attention chiefly because of the circumstances and not because of our feeling for the victim.

The film story may combine tragedy with less serious material or with comedy, and the amateur is well advised to place his tragic circumstances well forward in his story and so to use them as a springboard from which his characters leap to happiness. The importance of detail in a tragic scene cannot be overestimated; some incident, even a word, wrongly selected, may cause a laugh that turns tragedy into farce. A touch of insincerity in speech, action or circumstance, may ruin a scene intended to be impressive.

Melodrama bears somewhat the same relation to tragedy as farce does to comedy. It requires sensational situations with exaggerated power to affect the plot actors and it also needs acute conflict. The plot is more important than the characterization because the plot controls the characters. The action, the events, are stressed and chance or fortune is the motivating factor. The weakness of melodrama lies in the use of plot for plot's sake.

People are generally agreed on what is tragic, but there is a wide diversity of opinion as to what is amusing. A child's definition of a good photoplay was "something you like that makes you laugh." That "something you like" is important. A beholder hardly can help being somewhat affected by a tragic scene, but whether or not he will be amused by a comedy depends considerably on his mood at the moment, his philosophy, his religion, his education and his nationality. What amuses a Frenchman may not amuse an American. The broadness of German humor may offend the Englishman. Therefore, humor in the film story must offer a sufficiently wide appeal to justify its picturization.

There is a tremendous amount of comedy and humor in real life if one only can see it. Whenever you find yourself laughing at something that you have seen or heard, make a note of it. It may offer something that you can build into a story.

Comedy is the most difficult of all dramatic forms. It cannot be charted or measured, and audience reactions to situations intended to amuse are varied. Yet even the most serious screen drama should have its "comedy relief," should have some light touch of absurdity. Comedy must be done with a light touch; if you scratch too deeply you find there always is an underlying layer of tragedy. A clothesline with homely garments hung thereon may be intensely funny, intensely pathetic, or boring, according to the attitude of the spectator. An amusing situation may arise out of a misunderstanding, out of exaggerated contrast, the unexpected accident, the embarrassing or ridiculous situation, or out of incongruity; but it is funny always at the expense of some person. It should appear to be spontaneous and should grow out of the events of the plot and be fully in harmony with characterization.

In the film version of Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, the need for comedy relief was supplied by situations built around the "courting stick" and the "ducking stool," thus keeping the comedy in harmony with the era, place and action of the story. It is preferable to get a laugh out of action, out of a combination of character and circumstances, rather than out of words. In straight comedy, character dominates; in farce, the action need be based neither on character nor plausibility.

Contrary to popular opinion, an audience is more apt to laugh at funny situations with which it already is familiar than at entirely new ones. Usually it will laugh at almost anything that it previously has regarded as funny, and laughing at certain situations or circumstances sometimes is a habit. Emotion is contagious, one laugh brings another, and a laugh caused by situations or lines in the first part of the photoplay or story is worth two at the end.

Comedy combines naturally with pathos, though not with tragedy. The most effective story contains a cleverly contrived mixture of pathos and comedy. In a serious drama, a bit of comedy—not enough to interrupt the plot—will relieve a situation that might otherwise be flat, for humor does much to freshen a scene and to give it life. Comedy requires more detail than tragedy, and dialogue has a more important place in it. The comedy of manners is often serious except for its pungent and witty dialogue. But unless he can invent sufficient action to carry a slight plot, the beginner will do well to avoid it.

Very subtle satire or very ironic humor, unless perhaps the obvious and impartial irony of René Clair, has no place in the film story intended for sale to the American studios. Like the writing of farce, which is compiled or developed as it is being screened, it had best be left to the studio staffs.

The success of the film story writer depends on the effect his story has upon reader and editor, and it will not get past them if they have any difficulty in understanding what he means. Not only must he write and plot so that "he who runs may read," but he must express his ideas in such a way that they interpret them exactly as he does. Once his story has been rejected, he will have no opportunity to explain his meaning or to make it clear. This insistence on clearness is a "counsel of perfection" that from the beginning of time has been impressed upon the story-teller. "Care should be taken," explained Quintillian, "not that the reader may understand if he will, but that he must understand whether he will or not."

His own familiarity with his story necessitates special effort on the part of the writer to include everything required to make it clear to others. He often fails to distinguish between what is in his mind and what he has put in writing. He neglects to consider that the editor knows nothing of the story except what is written in the manuscript he is reading; that he gets no characterization but that suggested by the words actually set down on the paper.

Time is the essence of the motion-picture business, and readers have none to spare for reading back in the hope of discovering the meaning of the plot line. Anything that puzzles them or halts them as they read the story breaks the interest and destroys the rapport between writer and reader and, of course, increases the likelihood of rejection. Studio readers usually work under considerable pressure. They are not required to spend time probing for a story in a mass of verbiage. They are not especially interested in any story; if they can skip through it and emerge with a clear idea of the plot, they are apt to be favorably inclined. Their attention may be distracted, to the writer's disadvantage, by annoying mistakes in grammar, by misleading or ambiguous sentence construction, or by masses of irrelevant description or discussions of complex psychological reactions. Dialect in too great quantity, or too unusual, or incomprehensible; discrepancies in ages, costumes or backgrounds, or historical inaccuracies; long and rambling sentences; also, poor typewriting—all may serve to distract a reader's attention from the story itself.

Carry the reader smoothly along from sentence to paragraph to page with no effort on his part and he will in all probability read to the end of the manuscript. He wants to get the story as quickly and easily as possible and he wants it without frills. Use concrete words that are generally familiar: words that make the reader see the murderous blow, or the romantic moonlight scene, hear the happy prattle of a child or the despairing moan of an injured soldier.

One of the oldest and most inviolable rules for the stage play is: *State every important fact three times, for the play is lost if the audience fails to understand the premises on which it is based.* The motion picture is under just as much necessity to make its premises clear either through action or dialogue.

Clearness requires completeness of plot, of characterization and of actions. The story must be entire; it must pose no questions that it does not answer. It demands the depiction of the particular, not of the general; and it demands writing that is exact and definite and that gives emphasis only where it is due. Say as simply and as plainly as possible just what you want an audience to see.

Consistency is a help in securing clearness. A reader has reason to reject a carelessly written manuscript when he finds characters given names confusingly alike, or when he finds one character given two different names, or when extra or unexplained characters appear in a scene, or when characters act upon information that they have not yet received.

Psychologists tell us that the method used in presenting an idea profoundly influences its effect. Even the order in which ideas are presented may determine the speed with which they are conveyed and received. To hold attention, any subject matter must introduce something new and interesting at short intervals. Change is the ever present factor in human life, because life is ever demanding change.

By way of encouragement, I quote R. L. Stevenson: "Passion, wisdom, creative force, the power of mystery or color, are allotted in the hour of birth, and can be neither learned nor simulated. But the just and dexterous use of what qualities we have, the proportion of one part to another and to the whole, the elision of the useless, the accentuation of the important, and the preservation of a uniform character from end to end—these, which taken together constitute technical perfection, are to some degree within the reach of industry and intellectual courage."

VIII. EMOTION

"All good art communicates an emotion that draws men together."

—TOLSTOI

"He is indeed the enchanter whose spell operates not upon the senses, but upon the emotions and the heart."

—WASHINGTON IRVING

THE emotions are the most powerful of all agencies that affect human character, and the writer who would make his fictional characters convincing portrayals of life requires a broad understanding of the range and the causes and effects of emotion.

The emotions of greatest effect are *love,* the positive force, with the powers of attraction and creation; and *fear,* the negative force, with the powers of repulsion and destruction. All emotions that induce the more beneficent activities, such as the religious feeling of faith, the moral feeling of self-respect, and the esthete's feeling for beauty,—may be justly regarded as aspects of love. From love arise courage, joy, happiness, gaiety, satisfaction, beauty and harmony; but the brood of fear includes greed, hate, anger, jealousy, revenge, and all the degenerating forces that produce human misery, pain, crime and cruelty. The recognition of the regenerating or destructive effect of powerful emotion has produced the great literature of the world.

The range of emotional reaction is great. The manifestations of love are infinite in variety. Fear may range from that which causes only embarrassment to terror so extreme that it renders the subject insane. Whatever interrupts a person's normal progress through life, whatever blocks a desire of any strength, stimulates his emotion. If there is no opposition to desire, there is no emotion. All conflict, in the last analysis, is a conflict of emotions.

Emotion always arises in connection with some idea that is accepted as a cause for joy, or fear, or worry, or anger, or some other feeling; and it always reacts on the body. Generally it finds expression in voluntary bodily attitudes or in action, and it inevitably is accompanied by some form of involuntary bodily activity, even if this be nothing more than a quickening of the pulse. When a person is afraid, his whole being is afraid. He is not afraid with some supposedly detached emotional organ. And as emotion always strives to accomplish some purpose, his immediate reaction is to do something quickly. If he has an idea that the earth is quaking, this idea begets fear and excitement in his mind; his body responds to those feelings by more rapid heart beat; he cries out and runs to get his family to a place of safety.

Apprehension causes a person to stop, look and listen, to step back or to turn away. Fear may cause him to scream or to fight; horror may paralyze him or cause him to faint. Anger always requires a discharge of physical energy. Nor is the actual expression of emotion limited by language. The movements or changes of face or of body that express emotion are understood by all races.

If a film story states that a character is in the throes of romantic passion but depicts him acting in a lethargic fashion, the writer will not achieve the effect he intended, because both the bodily effects and the voluntary acts are needed to make the emotion evident. Notice this passage from a story:

Sonia turned the corner of the shed and suddenly saw the raging Katos bring the axe sharply down on the neck of her beloved fawn. Disregarding him, she walked quietly away, swinging her hat by its ribbon. A few minutes later as Katos passed, she drew a pistol from the folds of her dress and shot him.

This is "tripe" for the reason that it is emotionally false. The shooting was her second, her voluntary reaction, but what was the first? If Sonia were human enough to love her pet at all, she would, whether she wanted to or not, react in some way when she saw it murdered. If she were sufficiently concerned about the death of the animal to shoot the man who destroyed it, she could not have helped showing her feeling when she saw it killed. She would have screamed, fainted, cursed, gasped, raved or otherwise revealed involuntarily the presence of the emotion that induced her to shoot the man.

Consider the possible reactions to an insulting speech made by one man to another: Character **A** instinctively lashes out with his fist; **B** protests orally. **C** immediately leaves in annoyance and dignity. **D** grieves and tells everyone he meets about the insult. **E** scorns it and soon forgets it. **F** says little, but allows it to fester in his mind until he develops a strong hatred. **G** thinks it over coolly and deliberately and determines on a course of action concerning it, then carries out the action. **H** thinks it over, decides to do something about it, but never gets around to doing it. I merely laughs it off.

An epithet which, if applied to him, might arouse an Irishman's anger, might highly amuse a Russian or produce no effect at all on an Indian. What arouses savagery and cruelty in the uncivilized may arouse little reaction in the civilized. If the mate of a savage is stolen from him, his rage urges him to kill the thief, but most civilized men have learned the unsatisfactory result of such a form of expression. In a similar case they usually seek the divorce court or may even accept a sum of money as satisfaction.

I never have forgotten the reactions of two fortunate and successful persons who were with me some years ago when an ancient Italian woman with a market-basket stumbled as she stepped from a street car, and made a frantic and awkward effort to recover her vegetables that were rolling down the steep slope. One of my friends broke into irrepressible laughter as a head of cabbage slipped from the old woman's work-worn fingers and was crushed under the wheels of a truck. The other merely muttered in some annoyance, "Why in the world can't women learn not to get off a street-car backwards?" But because I suspected what part that basket of vegetables played in the family economy, and because I feared that the loss of the cabbage might mean the loss of a meal for hungry little children, I was conscious only of sympathy for the old woman and of regret for her accident.

What induces emotion in an individual depends on his health, his habits, his education, his ethical standards, his race or nationality, and his environment. The manner in which he expresses his emotion is modified by the same factors; in fact, it may be conditioned by any force affecting him. The loss of any normal function—sight, hearing, or memory—will modify individual reactions.

When any emotion is fully expressed, when a desire is satisfied, the sense of obstruction, of discomfort, is overcome and replaced with a sense of satisfaction. An emotion can be displaced by a different one, but it cannot be destroyed or wholly suppressed, though its effects may be more or less inhibited. If an attempt is made to repress it through an effort of will, the physical effects may continue. A man who is frightened may refrain from voluntary action, but his nerves and muscles will react in their own way. Fear may make the face pale, the throat constrict, the mouth twitch and the knees tremble. Anger makes the face flush and the voice thicken; passion hastens the heart beat and the breathing. Even if a man shows none of these reactions, he may find that his nerves refuse to let him sleep on the night following the feeling of anger or fear.

A powerful and lasting emotion that is held in, that is damned up by an effort of will and deprived of expression, will surely twist the individual repressing it into something less than normal, and such repression may result in some form of mental unbalance. Literature in all generations has found striking characters among those whose emotional energy was deprived of any satisfying channel.

Unsatisfied emotion, however, may be sublimated rather than repressed, and repression and sublimation should not be confused. The sublimation of an emotional impulse calls for the utilization, in some satisfying manner, of the energy it generates. Both literature and history have depicted in many ways the conversion of horror or indignation into a force that demanded public recognition of some social iniquity and so led to its correction. According to many psychologists, all art represents a utilization of sexual energy. The utilization of emotional energy in this fashion may be complete and may give the individual a greater satisfaction than he might have derived from its expression in a more ordinary or primitive way.

Opposition rarely has the effect of destroying an emotion and often serves to strengthen it. The emotion will not leave the consciousness until something stronger takes its place. A man whose guest arouses his anger may find his code of hospitality opposing his expression of that emotion in the presence of the guest; but unless some other emotion takes its place, his anger will remain until his guest leaves and will be more strongly expressed because of its temporary repression.

In addition to the bodily reactions, emotion also incites voluntary activity; it demands that something be done to satisfy it. The person experiencing an emotion, if it is unpleasant, strives to revise its underlying idea or to place himself in a position where he will not be affected by it.

Emotion on the other hand cannot be considered as being separated from thought, and it gives direction and force to thought. You cannot see emotion, but you can see its effects; therefore the writer can reveal the emotion of his character through the effect it has upon them, through the involuntary and voluntary activity that the emotion causes. When creating characters, he should realize that a shallow-minded person cannot know a deep feeling; only the strong can experience great emotion.

But before considering how to depict emotion for the screen, we must know *whose* emotions we are considering because there is, first, the emotion that makes the character what he is; second, the emotion that the story is designed to produce in those who read or see it; and, third, there is the emotion that the writer feels as he writes. The first two can be achieved through deliberate effort. As for the third, a writer who has never experienced in any degree the emotion he seeks to depict, or in whom no semblance of emotion is aroused by imaginative writing, is most unlikely to contrive a scene that will thrill others. He who would reach the hearts of his readers must be capable of being touched by his own experiences, be they actual or imaginary. He must be one on whom experience makes a definite impression, and he must be able through the medium of words to convey to others his own peculiar recognition of the experience. He must not only recognize its material, but he must also recognize its effect upon himself and be able to make others feel the same effect. *It is the recognition of the emotional content and the emotional effect of experience that gives a writer his power.* In one sense, it is not the experience of an imaginary character that is given in a story; it is the experience of the writer himself.

It is true that a person may be profoundly moved emotionally without having any intellectual comprehension of the matter that so moved him. Conversely, the ability to comprehend a story is not always coupled with a tendency to respond emotionally.

In his *Principles of Literary Criticism*, C. T. Winchester says: "When we say that emotion must be 'genuine,' we usually are thinking that the writer must really feel himself what he pretends to feel: when we say that a story has many powerful situations, we oftenest have in mind the exhibitions of powerful emotions by the characters; and when we speak of a passage as thrilling, or pathetic, or inspiring, we refer to its effects on our own emotions."

In writing the film story, keep in mind that the object is to make the reader or spectator *feel*. The object of all drama is to move an audience to some definite feeling; to make an impression not on the intellect, but on the senses. There will be no emotional response from a spectator or reader until there first is developed some degree of concord between him and the characters. It is this concord that makes an audience share a character's desire to see certain things happen, and to wait tensely in the hope that they will. Keep an audience sympathetic and you are sure of its emotional response, for the audience comes to the theater very largely for the purpose of having its sympathies aroused. Theoretically, at least, the photoplay is a record of emotion that arouses emotion in those who see it. Give it characters with whose sufferings and happiness they can sympathize and you have pleased them. Let them see plainly all that your characters plan, all that they endure, all they lose and gain.

The more the writer understands about emotion, the more he will be able to impress those who read or see his story. He cannot argue with or persuade these persons, he cannot command their attention; he can touch them only through their senses and only by an appeal to their temperament. For people instinctively resent their own suggestibility and fight any obvious attempt to force their feelings.

The emotion felt by a spectator or reader is often entirely different from the emotion presented on the screen. To see a man brutally threatening a frightened child causes the spectators to respond with rising indignation and to enjoy a feeling of satisfaction when the child is saved. The jealous cruel father in *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* aroused no jealousy in his audience, but a strong and exciting resentment against him. It is true that the contemplation of the suffering of actors on the screen does not ordinarily cause us to suffer. We may even enjoy it because we know the suffering is not real and because we feel no cause to "do" anything about it. We know also that a character's courage, his stamina, must be tried if there is to be a tale worth telling. There is no tragedy unless someone suffers and the depth of the suffering determines the depth of the tragedy. The discomfort of a feeble old man forced to give up his comfortable chair by the fireplace may be pathetic; the sorrow of a woman forced to give up her lover may be tragic.

The writer cannot *apply* emotion to a character, but he can build a character with traits that tend to produce certain emotions and he can set him in an environment that causes the most effective expression of them. When plot actors logically exhibit strong emotions, powerful situations result; but they must have good reason for their feelings. Emotion without reason suggests a lack of mental balance and is apt to disgust those who see it. The emotion must relate to events that are inherent in the plot; it must be appropriate to the situation involved. The length and force and quality of its expression must be properly proportionate and it must be sufficiently vivid to thrill those who read it or see it. And not only should a character's display of emotion have a reasonable basis, but it should have a reasonable purpose; either to forward the action by determining his next movement, or to make evident his attitude towards the other characters, or to reveal his own traits.

There is no point in showing emotional reactions that are not significant. They merely delay the plot and waste footage. Nor should an emotional reaction be shown for its own sake. If it is not needed to depict character, or to provide a motive for an act, or for comedy, it has no place in the film story. Emotion should not be determined solely by plot exigencies. If a plot is based largely on character, it is based naturally on the dominant emotion that distinguishes the character.

Naturally a reader or spectator cannot be expected to react as frequently or as forcefully as do the characters he watches. We cannot feel with great intensity that which we ourselves are not experiencing. Therefore, to arouse feeling in reader and audience they must be *shown* whatever it is that incites the emotion; a reference to it is insufficient.

Contrary to the common belief of the amateur, emotion, its cause and reaction, may be presented far more strongly in writing than it may on the screen because people can read of horror, or brutality, or suffering, that they could not bear to see in a photoplay. To depict a character experiencing intense emotion for any great length of time is to invite monotony or to destroy all illusion of reality. A flash of emotional feeling may reveal character more clearly than will a long drawn-out scene, but if the motivation or the provocation for some emotional response is increased, that justifies increasing the strength and the duration of it.

It is a waste of time for the commercial film writer to seek the too sensational or bizarre. The great stories lie in the interpretation of the emotional experiences of the common life of yesterday and today. These experiences are modified as life in general is modified, but the underlying emotions are the same.

Romantic love scenes, by their nature, readily induce an emotional response, but it is well to distinguish between them and exaggeratedly "sexy" scenes. That it contains suggestive scenes is no guarantee that a story has photoplay value, and the depiction of extreme sexual love or antagonism has never been as essential financially as some producers have believed. Today the market value of the picture based on crudely expressed sex passion is less than ever, and financial success has been gained by pictures with no stressing of sex interest, such as those produced by Harold Lloyd and Charlie Chaplin, and by others as varied as *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, *Green Pastures*, *One in a Million*, and *The Covered Wagon*. It is also significant that the greatest box-office attraction of 1935-36 was a small child in pictures of unquestioned decency. The studios cannot afford to alienate the family groups and the religious organizations which believe that "sex appeal" should not be exploited too impetuously, at least, not on the screen. The love story, as distinguished from the excessively sexy story, has by far the greater popularity.

On the other hand, the story based on sex attraction or antagonism and the problems these incur in normal lives, always finds a market if told with skill and good taste. Sexuality, in the film story, is offensive only when presented with no relation to the rest of life; when it is picked out from its surroundings and highly exaggerated. Obviously, it is not sex in itself that is objectionable, but the way in which it is presented. It will help the writer to keep in mind that one difference between love and sexual passion is that the latter is a form of behavior which love may or may not use as a form of expression; while love is a motive, a primary cause.

In speaking of the necessity for writing in emotional terms, I do not mean that the characters must at all times be either in a rage, or in fear, or in horror, or passionately in love, or under some strong stress. The lighter shades of emotion often are preferable. Emotion is susceptible of many gradations and colors, and very infrequently needs to be expressed by violent gestures and wild outbursts of speech. As a matter of fact, unless the characterization demands such action, far better effects are secured by a more subtle, a more restrained expression. Restraint may give power to a story or to acting. In *A Star Is Born* the rise of one motion-picture star and the fall of another was presented with such admirable restraint that it became a poignant picturization of human life such as never is achieved by the usual story of stage or studio life with tinseled and sensational scenes.

Observe, for further example, the difference in the expression of grief by Greta Garbo and by Lupe Velez. The former exhibits the subdued emotional reaction which civilization has tended to encourage. Social taboos have made normal the inhibiting of certain emotions and nowadays much of a child's training consists in acquiring such inhibitions. The person who displays his emotions too freely and easily is said to be primitive or ill-bred. In portraying the emotion of an intellectual and cultivated character, more restraint, though no less power and sincerity, should be exhibited than in the portrayal of a less cultured mentality. The effort of a character to suppress passion or grief may arouse even more sympathy than would its complete exhibition.

In writing an important scene, write as fully as may be necessary to make the intensity, the stress, of the emotion clear.

To say, "John cursed him," gives no sense of John's emotion. But if you say, "John's hands clenched convulsively, his breathing quickened. 'You damned rat!' he muttered with intense vindictiveness," then at least, you will let the reader know something of John's feelings. "Bits of business" often are used to increase emotional response. A detail that wins surprising response in *Min and Bill* occurs when Min, on the verge of being apprehended for a murder done to save the girl she loves, is plodding along with downcast head. She apparently is drained of all emotion, but when she comes to an old can lying in her path she kicks it viciously away.

Test your story for the feeling it arouses in a reader. Then add, rearrange and build up your scenes until they have an emotional pull. There are numerous textbooks on the psychology of emotion that may be studied with profit, but our most successful film-story writers seem to have learned largely through experience and observation what "gets" an audience.

In real life, an emotion is not sharply defined; it is blended with other emotions and out of this blending may arise secondary feelings. There often is a complex mingling of emotions. But although the film story permits a character to express several emotions, he may express only one at a time, for complexity of any kind is of little value in the photoplay. The writer must keep in mind also that the subsidiary emotions must always be consistent with the basic one. While a coward in some situations might be aggressive, it would be inadvisable to show him in any episode as being valiant. Some particular emotion should control a character throughout. If you write a story in which the hero is controlled by a spirit of renunciation in the first half and by ambition in the second, you have two stories, not one.

Not only the characters, but the audience, may experience different emotions during the photoplay. It may pity one character and hate another, and admire a third. But from the whole picture it must derive satisfaction and a sense that the story was some particular kind; that it was happy, or sad, or amusing, or impressive.

Do not confuse the dominant emotion with the theme. The basic emotion in *Min and Bill* was Min's self-sacrificing love, but the theme was the love of a woman of a rough type for a child not her own.

IX. COMMON ERRORS

Life, as it happens, fails often to have a recognizable pattern, like the orderly things called stories . . . for you may bleed your heart out and finally die of the wound, and yet the pain of which you die, the drama which caused your heart to bleed, will have had neither logical beginning nor definite end, and in the whole course of it, though it has been life and death to you, there will have been none of those first aids to the reader—suspense, dramatic contrast, or plot. You have suffered and died, but it hasn't made a story.

—MARY HEATON VORSE, "A CHILD'S GARDEN"

THE amateur writer of film stories has a tendency to make certain errors over and over. In the hope that by pointing out specifically some of the commoner ones I may enable the writer to recognize them, I have included this brief chapter on such errors although, in a sense, it states negatively what the other chapters state affirmatively.

There is very generally insufficient screenable material in beginners' stories. A story may be interesting and yet not contain sufficient action for one full reel, while it should have enough for five to eight. Surely, it is not too difficult to figure out whether or not a story offers enough material to take at least ninety minutes if acted. Bear in mind that the number of words in the story is no criterion of the amount of acting material it offers. A fifty-page story may have a dozen pages of description or of philosophic observations, or some other matter that offers no action. Remember also that the setting of a photoplay is not an *acting* factor; that it takes little time to picture it on the screen. Therefore, though pages of description may enable the producer to give your story an impressive setting, you still need in addition sufficient action to make a full length film.

Another common and basic defect is the failure to work out plots sufficiently before putting them on paper—the practice of beginning to write before knowing the conclusion of the plot or what idea or theme the story is to demonstrate. If one does not know what he is going to write about, naturally he will have difficulty in writing a coherent story. Even when the story is clear and complete in mind, the writer, however experienced, may fail to get it entirely on paper. In its written form, something essential—perhaps most often motivation—is omitted, with the result that the reader is puzzled and antagonized. It pays to consider the story from the viewpoint of one who gets only what is in the manuscript.

Poor plot construction is the bane of many a beginner. When a story lacks continuity, that is, breaks into parts that have no close relation, the plot needs additional building up. While I have known those who built up complications and plot tangles so knotted that neither they nor anyone else could unravel them reasonably, a more usual defect is a too weak conflict which, of course, results in a weak climax. The struggles recounted are not important enough, the difficulties are not impressive, and to overcome them requires no interesting activity on the part of the plot actors. It seems almost as if some writers are afraid to hurt their characters, are afraid to make them suffer, or to get them into distressing situations from which they must fight their way out. Yet one of the very first things any fiction writer must learn is that where there is no struggle there is no drama.

Nor should more or less meaningless phrases be used in place of statements of the appropriate action. I recall a love scene in a story which according to its author, an amateur writer, was perfect for the screen, in which the only clue to the heroine's reaction was the phrase, "Her eyes shone with love." Another writer thought he had supplied motivation when he wrote of his protagonist, "His eyes showed his intent to murder." It apparently never occurred to these authors that both of these phrases called for extraordinary ability on the part of the actors. A concrete actable scene is what is needed.

The practice of writing *about* what took place in story situations instead of showing the action lessens the dramatic value of a story. A situation, if at all important, should be presented in full, just as you expect it to appear. Let your characters act it out. Telling about a scene generally indicates that the writer does not recognize the dramatic possibilities of his plot events and, as a result, fails to develop them in the most interesting way.

Dialogue defects include the use of too much dialogue, too long single speeches, and too little differentiation in speech. Sometimes the variation in speech does not correspond to the supposed variation in the culture of the characters. Occasionally the dialogue is not sufficiently tagged so that the reader may know which character is speaking.

Often a story begins too far back in the life of the principal. It is better to start with the factors that lead to the climax and to reveal, as the story proceeds, only as much of the past as is essential to make the plot clear. For example, in the photoplay adaption of *Camille*, there is no need to picture Camille's early life before she became a famous courtesan. The great complication in her life relates to Armand. All that the audience needs to know concerning her life previous to that time is revealed by herself and by her friends and her enemies later in the story. And then the revelation is used as a cause for a new set of actions.

Occasionally stories leave the reader in doubt as to which plot actor is the main character, although it would seem to be obvious that if the author cannot decide this he need not expect a reader or an audience to do it for him. Very frequently the hero is not sufficiently "sold" to the reader; he makes little appeal to anyone because he does nothing to gain sympathy. Sometimes this happens because action that belongs to the principal has been given to other characters, and the reader's attention is drawn away from him. Too many characters may cause confusion. A reader can keep clearly in mind only a limited number at a time.

Important characters are not always introduced early enough in the story, with the result that when they do appear, the reader must readjust his first conception of the plot. A character may appear and then disappear without any apparent purpose, or he may be so lacking in ordinary human qualities that any audience would refuse to accept him without considerable, carefully worked out motivation. Pages are wasted in telling what a character expects to do instead of letting him speak for himself. Describing a character's physical appearance in photographic detail is another way of wasting effort. It indicates that the writer has little comprehension of the fact that a producer, as a rule, must use the actors with whom his company has contracts. Occasionally the principal character so closely resembles one particular star that it would be difficult to cast any other in his place.

Sometimes, themes are suggested by plots, but are never proven; that is, the purpose of the story is forgotten before the end. The plot line disappears before the end of a story, and the ending bears no relation to the beginning. One of the very first things the writer needs to learn is to stick to his subject, to his characters and to his purpose.

Most writers are convinced of the need for emotion in the film story, but some appear to assume that an audience will reflect whatever emotion the plot actors display and quite fail to realize that the feeling expressed by the actors may arouse an entirely different one in the spectators. Frequently, the story does not focus on the presumably dominant emotion because it is not one that is inherent in the plot, but one that arises in connection with some secondary character or secondary situation.

In his effort to give an audience a thrill, the tyro may write a story that shrieks with emotion from beginning to end. The result merely causes the readers to suffer boredom. He may depict scenes of extreme agony or extreme cruelty or wholesale slaughter. None of these things necessarily makes an effective story, nor are violent action and language always dramatic.

From an effort to be original and striking, comes the story that, if screened, would be entirely devoid of any illusion of reality. I have tried to make it clear that there is no objection to the depiction of something that is impossible, provided it appears probable. Time and time again, successful photoplays show scenes that very likely would never happen in actual life, but they are so presented that the audience accepts them. They must suggest their own possibility and not offend the spectator's intelligence. Another reason why beginners' stories may fail to give the illusion of reality is that events leading up to important action are omitted. The inexperienced writer leaps from action to action and from crisis to climax without showing the intervening factors.

The screen has not yet pictured a number of literary masterpieces because of casting problems. For example, Kipling's magnificent and colorful *Kim* waited long for production because of the difficulty of finding a child sufficiently precocious to play the lead. Yet casting limitations receive little attention from beginners. What chance of being produced have the stories that require, as one did, a cast of characters all over eight feet in height, or animals who can speak and write? I have heard of stories that called for the picturization of the entire United States Army or the entire Navy, or of country-wide "conflagrations" or floods. One even called for the destruction of the world.

The professional writer has no feeling about slashing, tearing down, cutting and rebuilding his story, but once the amateur has written something down on paper, he apparently cannot bear to subtract anything from it or add anything to it. Even if it is perfectly obvious that a scene is incomplete or that it has no place in the story, he can hardly be persuaded to rewrite it or to eliminate it.

There seems to be a definite desire to use settings with which the writer has little familiarity. Nor does he realize that an inappropriate or incredible setting may prevent the sale of a story, and that there is one particular setting in which each plot will appear to greater advantage than in any other. It was not a Long Islander who wrote a dramatic love scene which took place in a rose-covered bower there in February. The tyro seeking a foreign setting may indicate a transatlantic liner docking at Paris, palms lining the Bois, and pepper trees growing on the Maine coast.

Only carelessness or laziness can account for the number of inaccuracies relating to history, geography, flora or fauna, or in the detail of special settings or periods. Telephones and airplanes often, in scripts, are used years before they were invented.

Any studio reader or agent knows that manuscripts (and not only those of beginners) offer a great variety of contradictions and inconsistencies. Characters change their names without explanation; others change the color of their eyes or hair. The use of firearms leads to many mistakes: rifles spray shot, and shotguns drill a single hole, or the hero fires eight shots from a Colt forty-five without bothering to reload. It rarely is necessary to mention calibers, but they commonly are dragged in and often are wrong: as in a crime story in which the victim was despatched with a "Standard 28." A sloop, a ketch, a schooner, a brig, a yawl, all are "boats" to the uninformed and may be rigged in a fashion that not only belies their names, but that never was seen at sea. Aviators, in fiction, perform stunts that defy the laws of air and of airplane construction. The functions of ailerons and of rudders are confused and the fact that the controls reverse after the plane reaches a forty-five degree angle on a bank is entirely ignored.

Characters frequently are deprived of the information that controls their action. The heroine flees from her home because the villain pursues her but does not find out that he is pursuing her until two pages later. She has the clairvoyant ability to act on information that has not yet reached her.

A similarity of names may confuse the reader who has little time to identify each with the proper character or place. Also, introducing a character by his full name and allowing him to appear under several nicknames may be confusing. Sometimes a story will run for two or three pages giving the actions of a character but never mentioning his name.

Another defect is an obvious lapse of time without any action. For example: "It was clear next morning, so Lois rowed out to the sloop and began her hunt for the letters. At home that evening she decided. . . ." The reader stops to wonder whether or not she got the letters and what she did during the day. A nineteen-year-old hero waits impatiently for his release from a harsh guardian. Five years pass by, but the hero has to wait another year before he becomes twenty-one.

It may seem captious to object to action and speech that are related as if they were coincident when they could not possibly be, but this may be disturbing to a reader. " 'He'll never get in here!' exclaimed Sally as she locked the doors, closed and bolted all the windows and ran upstairs to fasten the roof trapdoors." By making two sentences out of this, the writer would have prevented the reader from stopping to comment that Sally did a great deal while saying five words.

A perusal of the notes made by studio readers on rejected manuscripts reveals that a surprising proportion were discarded because they did not have sufficient plot. They were "too slight" or "lacked action." The next largest proportion were "unconvincing"; that is, artificial, unreal, diffused, insincere. Others were refused because the subject-matter was "old stuff," "trite" or "hackneyed." Quite a number were "too limited in appeal," or "too unpleasant," or contained censorable matter. Some included situations "contrary to public policy" or those that would offend large groups of people. Some would cost too much to produce. Those that were illegible because of bad typing or that were unintelligible because of incomprehensible English were rejected on sight.

The writer who takes pains to study and analyze his own story from these various points of view will lessen the chances of its rejection.

X. STORY IDEAS

The knowledge of the world is only to be acquired in the world, and not in a closet. Books alone will never teach it to you; but they will suggest many things to your observation which might otherwise escape you; and your observations upon mankind, when compared with those which you find in books, will help you to fix the true point.

—LORD CHESTERFIELD, "LETTERS TO HIS SON"

TO paraphrase Carlyle, "A writer who could only sit in a chair and write stories would never write any stories worth the reading." Your story material naturally will be influenced in quality and quantity by the richness of your own life experience; by your own loving, fearing, suffering, struggling, and achieving. Therefore, as a writer, you are justified in seeking as rich and varied a life as possible. In any event, you need sufficient experience of your own so that you have some basis for understanding the feelings of persons undergoing experiences that suggest dramatic situations. If you have a limited range of interests in life, you will be able to comprehend and will be susceptible to only limited lines of experience. By widening the range of your own interests, you will be enabled at least to comprehend additional varieties of experience.

A very real and instinctive interest in your fellow-men is a prime necessity. Not that you need to be with people much of the time, but that you should have a lively curiosity about them. If you do not find people generally interesting, it is unlikely that you can picture them in such fashion as to make them appear interesting. If you have difficulty in finding story ideas, you may need to develop your own personality, to broaden your own outlook through contact with people in more varied groups, classes and places, and to increase your education generally.

But the sum total of his individual experience, no matter how wide, will not offer sufficient material for the professional writer of film stories. An old editorial saying is, in effect, that every human life has one good story in it, but few have more than one. Furthermore, knowledge derived from personal experience is haphazard and unorganized. It may supply incident or suggest feeling within a limited range, but because it is so much a part of himself, the writer may not recognize the story possibilities inherent in his own life. His outlook on his own experience is very apt to be prejudiced. He is limited to his own viewpoint. Imagination is useless without knowledge.

The knowledge of life that is most useful to the writer is that which he gains by observing and understanding the motives and acts of other people. His best opportunity for studying humanity lies in his contact with his family, his neighbors, his friends and acquaintances. Let him develop his powers of observation and analysis on these before he goes farther afield. If he cannot understand and sympathize with his own friends and neighbors, if he cannot see their side of things and get their point of view, he will have great difficulty in writing a story that will induce a sympathetic attitude in an audience. He who would write successful screen stories must be able to think with the crowd. He must not go too far afield from its experiences. An open mind is a great asset, and the writer needs to strive against the common tendency to close the mind to anything outside personal experience or anything that seems opposed to preconceived ideas and prejudices.

Especially if you wish to write screen stories you need enough contact with many of the varied lines of American life so that you can write convincingly of any of them. Study men and women and try to determine their impulses and passions and what they do under the pressure of these passions. Seek for the drama in human relationships. Dig out the drama and truth that lies buried in the lives that touch your own. You may find that those nearest to you are having a dramatic existence unrecognized either by themselves or by those around them. "The greatest heroes are unsung," and all about you are strange and beautiful and terrible happenings. I found my *Emma* in a woman who had worked for my family for more than thirty-five years. When she died I realized what an important part she had played in our lives, and by building a film story character with the real Emma's essential characteristics stressed and deepened, and by using situations that would call for their fullest expression, I brought her to the screen in a role played most sympathetically by the late Marie Dressler.

It is essential, of course, that you be able to recognize such story material when you come in touch with it. A writer who has had experience in newspaper reporting has an advantage because he has learned what offers human interest. If the life of the world about you seems dull, the fault lies in yourself. You are not seeing it clearly or not interpreting it rightly. Life is the basis of all drama, but you must learn not to look for *stories* nor even for plots, but for story material, a different thing. You must watch what people about you are doing and what is happening to them, and always where there is interesting action or change you must seek for motivation. You will learn that the nuclei of touching stories lies not in the lives of the eccentric or abnormal, but often in the lives of apparently commonplace persons. It was among the poor and humble that Dickens found lives rich in sacrifice and love.

Nearly every person offers some story material in his experiences, reactions, habits or mannerisms, but you must have sufficient imagination to see the import of these things and how they can be developed and applied in a story. Whatever you take from real life, be it characters, actions, events or motives, must be pointed and colored in order to be effective as film material. And this is not because of a need for luridness, but because the photoplay demands compression and intensity.

If you will recall a number of the characters in literature who have lived longest in human memory you will see that perhaps the majority of them were suggested by people who were not at all extraordinary in the age depicted. Hamlet was not an unusual type in his era and place, but Shakespeare's portrait of him is extraordinary in clearness and completeness. Try to determine what most interesting traits identify persons you know well and what situations those traits get their possessors into. The apparently ordinary round of work and play of those about you, the "seven ages" of man, and all the phenomena of life offer dramatic plot material—but only to those who can recognize it. It is impossible to know even a small group of people well without finding tragic and amusing situations in their lives.

Whatever in real life touches you deeply, irritates you, excites you, frightens you, inspires you, moves you in any way, may offer story material. The idea for *The Big House* came to me when I visited San Quentin prison and was greatly impressed by the danger imminent in the overcrowding there. Just as I had drafted my story, a riot broke out in the prison and suggested to me an unexpected but excellent climax.

Newspapers offer a constant source of story ideas because they strive to offer news of human interest. But do not expect the newspapers to furnish you with plots or stories. After every publicized murder trial, agents and studios are deluged with stories based on it which, generally, use the press material almost without change. That is merely reporting or copying.

The fiction writer's job is to recast and develop the newspaper story; to let it be colored by his own particular attitude toward life; to use it not as a story in itself, but as the basis for his own more completely rounded story. He may find a character in the news, and additional traits in a friend. A visit to a fair or factory may suggest his big scene. He combines material from many sources.

The professional writer for the films knows that it is not the factual matter in the news story, but *what it suggests* that is valuable. Often a news story pictures only the final scene in some great tragedy of life. If John Smith shoots himself and leaves a note saying he was tired of life, you have material for a newspaper item; but the real story, the drama, lies in whatever life experience led John Smith to the point where the desire to die overcame the desire to live. The actual fall of a monarchy is merely news, but what led up to it, or its effect on various groups of people, undoubtedly involves a dramatic story. An item describing a new invention may suggest how its development has changed the lives of human beings. Look for cause and effect in the newspaper story and your plot will soon develop.

Singapore was based on the newspaper and radio story of a ship with a cargo of munitions destined for Haile Selassie. The French Government would not allow it to land at Djebouti, the only port through which it might reach Ethiopia. Other countries also forbade the landing of the cargo, with the result that the captain was forced to keep the ship wandering about the high seas for months until at last some Chinese group bought the cargo. The photoplay pictures an adventurer with a shipload of munitions that he expects to sell to South American revolutionists. By the time he arrives the revolution is over and no one will buy his cargo, nor for a while does any country welcome him or his munitions. Of course, a girl has stowed away on the boat and the usual romance is developed.

A newspaper item suggested the story I built into *The Secret Six.* News accounts of the labor difficulties in a California fish-canning town gave me the basis for *Riff-Raff.* Newspaper items and articles offer a never-ending supply of themes, characters, plot situations and incidents.

Every industry offers story ideas with the particular coloring due to the requirements of the industry. Thus, stores, mines, fishing boats, steel mills, motion-picture studios, glass works, textile factories, et cetera, offer not only certain settings, but also those plot twists that could occur only in the specific industry. A farming tractor is hardly a romantic object, yet in the amusing experiences of a tractor salesman, William Hazlett Upson found ideas for a long series of stories which were published in the *Saturday Evening Post* and later produced in photoplay form. The experiences of salesmen in all lines: insurance, real estate, furniture, airplanes, toys, and so on endlessly, are filled with plot material. Business always has its own brand of romance.

The skilled trades offer another set of plot angles. For example, the life of a "trouble hunter" employed by a telegraph or telephone company offers a set of problems unlikely to be found elsewhere. The same is true of the life of a steel-worker, cabinet-maker, bonnaz operator, tailor, seamstress, cook, nurse, shoemaker, machinist or milliner. The experiences of an old gun-maker made a series of popular stories.

Professional occupations noticeably affect character as well as influence life experience. The outlook of a scientist, a lawyer, explorer or educator definitely will be colored by his work. Writers of all types of literature have found a fertile field in the problems and experiences faced by the members of the medical profession. *The Country Doctor, San Michele,* and

Damaged Goods are examples of the widely differing story material that this profession offers.

While we are dealing with occupations as a source of story material, it may not be amiss to advise that even the reports of the United States Census Bureau offer many a story suggestion.

The sports, hobbies and recreations of mankind are constant sources of plots. Recreations offer not only plot situations, but colorful settings, characters and backgrounds. Consider the golf story, the yachting story, the hunting or fishing story. I found the underlying idea of *The Champ* and of *The Prizefighter and the Lady* at a prize fight.

Next to life itself, perhaps the commonest source of material is books. This does not by any means presume that you will "lift" either characters, situations or setting from another person's writing. Literary larceny is a crime. You may, however, legitimately use whatever those characters, situations or settings *suggest* to you. In a following chapter on "Plagiarism," I discuss this at greater length; also the particular necessities attaching to the use of biography or history.

Popular books on science, books on exploration or travel, informal essays, legends, fables, myths, folklore—all may offer ideas to the writer. The basic material in *The Prince and the Pauper, The Thief of Bagdad* and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* came from old legends and folklore.

All the records pertaining to social problems, or to social efforts and achievements, whether in newspaper or book form, offer their own stories. Charles Francis Coe's study of racketeering gave him a wealth of material for magazine stories and photoplays. The housing scheme, the dole, subsistence projects, the rise of organized crime and the efforts of the government to subdue it, migrations, great fires, floods, mobs, dust storms—all may dramatically affect the lives of those involved in them and offer much for the writer.

Current political and economic movements invariably have an element of drama. Life under Communism and under Nazism furnished I. A. R. Wylie with unusual and absorbing material. Stories can be found in the coöperative movement, the old age pension plans, and in the history of all the groups which, from the time of the Crusades, have sought to secure through concerted effort some supposed good for themselves and their fellows.

There must be an enormous number of communities where quaint customs, religious beliefs, peculiar situation, or some other force gives a definite color to the life of the inhabitants. Joseph Lincoln found in a small area enough material for a long series of Cape Cod stories. Lately there have been a number of plays and novels based on the repressed and degenerate life found in certain southern communities.

Fads and various pseudo-philosophic movements offer colorful material. Under this heading I include, without prejudice, astrology, numerology, Fletcherism, palmistry, et cetera. The gypsy fortune teller and the effects of her predictions on the lives of those who believe her has appeared in fiction from the beginning of time and probably will continue to do so.

Any event of current public interest from the attempted assassination of a king to the birth of quintuplets may offer ideas to the discerning writer. If, however, his story relies solely on some such event, it must be published or produced before public interest in it is lost.

Environment has been the basic factor in many a plot. An hotel lobby, a saloon, a ballroom, a night club, a home (bare or luxurious), a slum, a park, a street, a store, a village crossroads, a farm, mountain, lake, forest and sea—all these have their particular offering for the writer who is blessed with the ability to see those things that go to make up an effective story.

It is a matter of seeing all places and things from the viewpoint of their story possibilities.

This list of suggestions as to where story ideas may be found is indicative rather than complete. It is included merely to show that material for stories can be found anywhere and everywhere. It will do the writer little good, however, to discover interesting ideas for settings, themes, characters, and for plot complications and twists, unless he jots them down in some fashion so that they will be available for use when needed. An enormous amount of story material recognized by writers is never used because they depend on memory to retain it, although they must know that the human memory is neither infallible nor always responsive.

A person who expects to make writing his profession will find it greatly to his advantage to write down his ideas, preferably on cards, and to file them under headings such as settings, plots, characters, themes, mannerisms, personal peculiarities, bits of conversation, unusually interesting expressions of speech, episodes, incidents, et cetera. The writer who cultivates this habit rarely will lack for material when he starts to build a story. Always, of course, it must be suitable for the screen. It is a waste of time for the film-story writer to record ideas which, though intensely interesting to him, would not be so to a sufficient number of other persons, or those which could not be developed without the use of censorable material, or those which cannot be made into plausible "acting" scenes.

XI. CENSORSHIP

"*All censorship exists to prevent anyone from challenging conceptions and existing institutions. All progress is initiated by challenging current conceptions and executed by supplanting existing institutions. Consequently, the first condition of progress is the removal of censorships. There is the whole case against censorship in a nutshell.*"

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, "PREFACES"

"*Selling the public whatever the public will buy—a theory of conduct which would justify the existence of every keeper of an opium den, of every foul creature who ministers to the vices of mankind.*"

—THEODORE ROOSEVELT

ACCORDING to Aristotle there are three things that make men good: "nature, habit and reason"; but in this year of grace a number of additional forces are making vigorous attempts to impress "goodness" on the makers of photoplays as far as their product is involved. I am not concerned in this volume with the right or wrong of censorship *per se* or in effect, but only with the truth that it must be accepted as an established force. It seems probable that the writer of film stories for commercial screening always will have to reckon with it in some form. Important sections of the American public are unwilling to abandon it, and I see no reason to expect any lessening of the scope and power of the censorship applied to the screen.

Censorship is more severe with the motion picture than with any other form of art, and this arises from the general recognition of the fact that the vivid reproduction of events on the screen before a large group of emotionally stirred persons prohibits the use of situations that might with propriety be described in a book to be read by separate individuals. The screen presents its material to the mass, to young and old, to the unbalanced as well as the balanced mind. It brings the audience into the scene presented, and there would seem to be no doubt that its vividness exercises a strong power of suggestion.

Every civilized country exercises some form of censorship over motion pictures, and also exercises the right to prevent the showing of pictures that it considers salacious. In the United States, censorship is exercised by half a dozen states and in most of the larger cities by boards established by legislation. In many cities and towns the police powers include the rarely used authority to prevent the exhibition of a picture that constitutes an offense against public morals. In addition, censorship is exercised by the churches and their many affiliated bodies, and by numerous civic groups, business men's associations, women's clubs, and other organizations that take upon themselves the function of censorship and exert a by-no-means negligible protest against pictures which they consider indecent. The ramifications of the groups that try to apply censorship in some form or other are innumerable and their ideas of the limitations that should be placed upon the photoplay apparently are based upon a sincere belief, justifiable or not, that a large section of the public that attends the motion pictures is immature emotionally and unbalanced mentally.

If all censorship powers were vested in a few responsible bodies, some sane conclusion as to what is a reasonable restriction might be reached, but there seems little hope for anything of this sort at the present. Because of the lack of correlation among these groups and their lack of agreement as to what constitutes censorable material, and because of the absence of definite or consistent standards, the existing state of censorship is unsatisfactory to almost all concerned with it, and it frequently results in complete absurdities. For example, pictures may be banned in three different states, but for three entirely different reasons. At this writing, Canada has eight separate censorship boards. *Scarface* was banned by several on the ground that it gave a too realistic picture of the underworld; other boards commended it as an outstanding lesson on the futility of crime. *Redheaded Woman* was banned, although it followed closely a story printed in a family magazine with very high standards.

The members of the boards established in states or cities by legislative enactment are often appointed as a matter of political expediency. These appointees may be persons who are entirely unfamiliar with situations and material commonly found in accepted literature and who have no basis for judging the effect of a scene upon anyone except themselves. They have been known to delegate their duties to persons of immature judgment or to those who had bigoted viewpoints. At times, the rulings of these local boards are based on purely personal likes and dislikes, and unquestionably are affected by politics, race, religion and similar factors rather than by any definite standard of morality. Some of these boards have no code or any tangible expression to indicate what they will or will not permit to be shown in the areas under their jurisdiction. As this makes their censorship largely a matter of opinion formed at the time they see the picture, the producer and writer have no way of knowing, until after they have expended effort, time and money, whether or not their picture will be cut or banned. Nor can much of a clue to these boards' ideas of what should be censored be obtained by a study of the scenes they have cut in previous pictures; for a line or act or posture eliminated from one picture may be passed in another for no discernible reason.

It may be taken for granted that these boards generally will ban scenes depicting nudity, prostitution, sex crimes, abnormal sex relationships, brothels, habitual immorality, miscegenation, doping, violent crime, forgery, counterfeiting, house-breaking, arson, and cruelty to children or animals.

In addition to these specific items, scenes with a strong anti-social or radical suggestion are likely to be cut. For example, those that may be construed as propaganda against existing governments, those depicting the courts as unjust, or showing a public official accepting graft; those that show strikes, lockouts and labor conditions other than incidentally. Nor may any established religion, its ministers or its ceremonies, be ridiculed. Obscene language, oaths, vulgar or suggestive expressions or gestures, and suggestive costumes, very generally are prohibited.

Some censorship groups consider attitude and viewpoint very important. Evil must not be glorified. Adultery must not be made an attractive state nor treated as comedy. Crime, criminals and debauchés must not be approved. Scenes picturing excessive drinking may be banned or cut. Other things that have been censored include the showing of real money, the use of a real automobile license number on a car used by criminals, the use of real telephone numbers and the names of real persons. Public policy dictates an absolute ban upon dialogue that calls for a character to shout "Fire!" or "Police!"

Local events and situations may cause a picture to be banned. *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* was temporarily banned from appearing just after a series of uprisings in Canadian penitentiaries. *Lynch Law* was banned in India during an outbreak of lynching there.

Censorship may add to the cost of a picture. To begin with, the censorship fees run from two to six dollars a reel—a charge which, when applied by a multiplicity of boards, amounts to a perceptible sum. If drastic cuts are imposed or if some scene essential to the story is banned, it may necessitate costly alterations to the film or cause the producer to lose all revenue in the prohibited areas.

The producer is interested chiefly in finding out what the public will pay to see. He knows that it wants a thrill, and a thrill in some way he must give it, but he cannot afford to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on a picture and then have it suppressed entirely or ruined by the cuts which legislative censorship boards are empowered to make. It follows, therefore, that he will not waste money in buying a story with situations that will invite attacks by censors.

To protect themselves to some extent, a group of motion-picture producers in Hollywood have adopted a code to which its signatories agree to abide. In its introduction this code publicly recognizes that the makers of a motion picture, because its presentations are apparently so real and because it is seen by "mature and immature, self-restrained and inflammatory, young and old, law-respecting and criminal," have some moral responsibility.

The working principles outlined in this code indicate a belief on the part of the producers that objection arises generally because of the *manner* of presentation rather than because of the subject-matter. It is how a thing is done, rather than the thing itself. As long as adultery, seduction, sexual immorality and scenes of unrestrained passion remain part of life they have a place on the screen, provided they are an essential part of the plot and are not merely interpolated to add "punch" to the story; and provided, also, that they are not given approval or presented in such a suggestive manner as "to arouse and excite the passions of the ordinary spectator." In discussing plot material, the code specifically declares that adultery "should not appear to be justified. It should not be used to weaken respect for marriage. It should not be presented as attractive or alluring." As for seduction, it "should never be introduced as subject-matter unless absolutely essential to a plot and it should *never* be treated as comedy. Where essential to the plot, it must not be more than suggested. Methods by which seduction essential to the plot is obtained should not be explicit or represented in detail where there is likelihood of arousing wrongful emotions on the part of the audience."

The code continues:

> Scenes of passion are sometimes necessary for the plot. However, a. They should appear only where necessary and not as an added stimulus to the emotions of the audience. b. When not essential to the plot, they should not occur. c. They must not be explicit in action nor vivid in method. d. In general, where essential to the plot, scenes of passion should not be presented in such a way as to arouse or excite the passions of the ordinary spectator.
>
> Sexual immorality is sometimes necessary for the plot. However, impure love of a man and a woman, forbidden by human and divine law, must be presented in such a way that:
>
> 1. It is clearly known by the audience to be wrong;
> 2. Its presentation does not exite sexual reactions, mental or physical in an ordinary audience;
> 3. It is not treated as a matter for comedy.
>
> Even within the limits of pure love, certain facts have been universally regarded by lawmakers as outside the limits of safe presentation.
>
> In the case of pure love, the difficulty is not so much about what details are permitted for presentation. This is perfectly clear in most cases. The difficulty concerns itself with the tact, delicacy and general regard for propriety manifested in their presentation. But in the case of impure love, the love which society has always regarded as wrong and which has been banned by divine law, the following are important:

a. It must not be the subject of comedy or farce or treated as material for laughter;
b. It must not be presented as attractive or beautiful;
c. It must not be presented in such a way as to arouse passion or morbid curiosity on the part of the audience;
d. It must not be made to seem right and permissible;
e. In general, it must not be detailed in manner or method.

Concerning crime, the producers' code says, in part:

b. Brutal killings should not be presented in detail.
c. Killings for revenge should not be justified, i.e., the hero should not take justice into his own hands in such a way as to make his killing seem justified. This does not refer to killings in self-defense.
d. Dueling should not be presented as right or just.

Crimes against the law naturally occur in the course of film stories, but

a. Criminals should not be made heroes, even if they are historical criminals.
b. Law and justice must not by the treatment they receive from criminals be made to seem wrong or ridiculous.
c. Methods of committing crimes, e.g., burglary, should not be so explicit as to teach the audience how crime can be committed; that is, the film should not serve as a possible school in crime methods for those who, seeing the methods, might use them.
d. Crime need not always be punished as long as the audience is made to know that it is wrong.

According to the code:

Vulgarity is the treatment of low, disgusting, unpleasant subjects which decent society considers outlawed from normal conversation. . . . Vulgarity in the motion pictures is limited in precisely the same way as in decent groups of men and women by the dictates of good taste and general usage, and by the effect of shock, scandal and harm on those coming in contact with this vulgarity.

Obscenity in fact, that is, the spoken word, gesture, episode, plot, is against divine and human law, and hence altogether outside the range of subject matter or treatment. . . . Obscenity should not be suggested by gesture, manner, etc. An obscene reference, even if it is expected to be understandable to only the more sophisticated part of the audience should not be introduced.

1. Oaths should never be used as a comedy element. Where required by the plot, the less offensive oath may be permitted.
2. Vulgar expressions come under the same treatment as vulgarity in general. Where women and children are to see the film, vulgar expressions (and oaths) should be cut to the absolute essentials required by the situation.
3. The name of Jesus Christ should never be used except in reverence.
4. Obscene language is treated as all obscenity.

Brothels and houses of ill fame, no matter of what country, are not proper locations for drama nor scenes of drama . . . sometimes their use may be necessary. Here care must be used to prevent them from seeming attractive or from arousing unpleasant curiosity. In general they are dangerous and bad dramatic locations.

Bedrooms:

1. In themselves, they are perfectly innocent. Their suggestion may be kept innocent. However, under certain conditions they are bad dramatic locations.
2. Their use in a comedy or farce (on the principle of the so-called bedroom farce) is wrong because they suggest sex laxity and obscenity.
3. In serious drama, their use should, where sex is suggested, be confined to absolute essentials, in accordance with the principles laid down above.

Religion:

1. No film or episode in a film should be allowed to throw ridicule on any religious faith honestly maintained.
2. Ministers of religion in their characters of ministers should not be used in comedy, as villains, or as unpleasant persons.
3. Ceremonies of any definite religion should be supervised by someone thoroughly conversant with that religion.

In addition, the code deals with what constitutes nudity, semi-nudity, obscene dances and costumes.

In England, the film studios censor their own output through the British Board of Film Censors, the members of which are paid by the motion-picture companies. The members of this board are men of standing, experience and diplomacy, and as a result of their conscientious and tactful labor they now are regarded as being fully official. They generally suppress pictures with Bible quotations used irreverently; those in which a girl bargains to sacrifice her virtue for any good or bad purpose; seduction and habitual immorality; marriage treated with contempt; references to birth control; a physician shown in a disgraceful light; "objectionable" prison scenes and police methods; all hangings or executions; debauchery; erotic dancing; scenes placed in a house of ill repute, crime plots, suicide, cruelty and torture. They prohibit also "objectionable" vulgarity in speech, gesture, action or costume and "vulgar" noises.

There would seem to be no need for a writer deliberately to select censorable material nor for him to assume that such material has greater box-office value. It is interesting to note how many of the financially successful pictures offer nothing censorable. I believe that film stories which depict the more worthwhile and the more decent situations in life will appeal to more persons than those that do not, and while a sordid picture occasionally may be a financial success, in the long run such pictures repel an appreciable number of movie-goers. This is not to say that they do not want realism, for they do; but overemphasis on sordidness or lewdness does disgust them.

Writers will do well to consider Professor William Lyon Phelps' remarks on censorship. "It should be remembered that if censorship should be established and we pass under arbitrary and irresponsible tyranny, it will not be the fault of the prudes or the reformers or the bigots. It will be the fault of those who destroy freedom by their selfish excesses. Excess leads to prohibitions. . . . Put the blame where it should justly fall, on those who wrote so abominably that in order to silence them the army of wise and high-minded authors had to wear fetters."

XII. HOW STORIES ARE SOLD

Business ability and creative talent frequently do not go hand in hand.

—AUTHORS' LEAGUE OF AMERICA

SHEER necessity closed the doors of the studios to the unsolicited manuscript. The enormous number of scripts that came to them offered so little of value that it hardly warranted the expense of opening and reading them, and, in addition, there were a surprising number of unjustified suits claiming plagiarism brought by unknown writers who asserted that the studios were producing photoplays based on their stories. As a matter of fact, much of the matter claimed as being original was in the public domain, and occasionally a writer himself had taken material from some copyrighted source, but it cost the studios large sums to defend themselves in these suits and additional expense arose from the delays in production that they caused.

Now, most of the motion-picture companies forbid their employees to open an unsolicited manuscript unless it comes through certain channels designated by the studios as being acceptable to them. If an unsolicited manuscript is opened by error, the studios may have it photographed page by page so that there can be no question of the actual content when in their possession. It is a practical impossibility for an unknown writer without some contact with a studio to sell his story directly to it. If he mails his manuscript to a studio, it probably will come back plainly stamped "Returned Unopened."

If you know a studio executive, producer, director, star or other employee of standing, who will take your story to the story editor or submit it with a note vouching for your responsibility and integrity, you may be sure that it will receive a careful reading. All these persons are seeking good stories and, as a rule, are willing to submit those of their friends, provided they are good stories. But do not think that a stranger or casual acquaintance can force a story on them. There have been too many cases where unsolicited stories turned out to have been copied word for word from some magazine. Do not believe for a moment that "pull" will sell your story. Influence may get it a reading, but no company can afford to buy stories that do not offer screen value. The story editor stands or falls on his selection of material that will be financially successful when filmed. Nothing else concerns him.

Another method of selling originals is to get work in any capacity at a studio and, when you have been accepted as a trustworthy person, to offer your stories directly to the story editor. Writers have taken positions as stenographers, typists, readers, file clerks, et cetera, for the purpose of "learning the business" and gaining the opportunity of submitting their stories directly.

Obviously, only a small number of writers can avail themselves of either of these methods, and the most easily available and the best way for the beginner to get his stories to the attention of the studio executives is through an established agent favorably known to them. To be sure, the agent will get a percentage of the proceeds, but the services he offers are well worth his fee and few beginners can reach the studios without his help. He will see that the writer does not part with rights in his story that he should retain, and that his compensation is adequate and that it is paid according to contract.

An established agent is established because his judgment has proved to be sound, because he knows what can and what cannot be sold to the studios. Not only does he understand the particular needs of each studio, but what is equally important, he understands the particular personality that heads each production department. It is his business to know at all times which producers are in the market for adventure tales, or comedies of manners, or melodrama, and he is sufficiently in touch with each studio so that he is able to select stories that provide it with vehicles for its particular stars. He knows that stories intended for Dietrich and Garbo must have foreign settings, not only because of their accents, but because the studios have gone to considerable expense to advertise them as being "exotic." A story with a sophisticated "hard-boiled" heroine will not be purchased for Janet Gaynor, nor one with a small town ingenue for Mae West. The new writer is advised to write the best story he can and to allow the agent to decide where it should be offered, for the story written so that it is adapted only to a single star has a very limited market.

The established agent has access to all the studios and will submit a story that seems worthwhile to all of them. But he will not waste his own time nor that of the studios by offering poor stories. Hence, he cannot be induced to accept stories that he knows to be unsalable. The cost of recording, reading and synopsizing a manuscript, or even of rejecting it, is more than many writers realize and the ten percent charge made by the agent is not unreasonable especially in the case of the writer unknown to the studios. Inasmuch as the studios welcome scripts from well-known authors and pay more for them than for those from new writers, the agent gets less money for more work when he sells the latter's stories. In the case of the little known author, the agent must spend extra time and effort to convince the studio editors that the script merits attention. As a matter of fact, busy agents would prefer not to handle the work of writers unknown to the public, but the demand for film stories is so great that they perforce not only must welcome the work of any free lance who has talent and technique, but in their own interest must give him help and encouragement.

This situation should inspire the beginner to write sufficiently well to interest the agent who receives his story, and to realize that he will be well paid if his efforts lead to the sale of his work. Even at the lowest rate, he will receive more from a studio than he would get for fiction of the same length sold elsewhere. Beware of the agent who charges anything but a percentage of the amount received for the story, or who demands a fee for criticism. Some of the latter offer much of value for the fees they charge, but it is true that there are others who have neither the ability nor the qualifications to help a writer. If you want to purchase criticism, get it from some competent person who specializes in that form of instruction.

I believe that the time is coming when all agents, literary and dramatic, will be licensed, and that this, if properly done, will eliminate those few who have no justification for offering to sell manuscripts. Another hope of mine is that the film-story writer will be paid on a percentage basis. Considering the income produced by a successful picture, the writer, with few exceptions, is grossly underpaid. Percentages now go to certain directors and actors and others; and I believe the payment of them could be made practicable in the case of the writer.

The *Film Daily Year Book of Motion Pictures,* which may be found in the public libraries, gives annually an up-to-date list of authors' agents with offices in Hollywood and New York.

Here is a list of outstanding authors' agents in Hollywood or its environs:

Phil Berg—Bert Allenberg, Inc., 9484 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills
Collier, Weber, Todd, Inc., 9441 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills
H. E. Edington, F. W. Vincent and Rosalie Stewart Corp., Equitable Building, Hollywood
Feldman-Blum Corporation, California Bank Building, Beverly Hills
Mitchell Gertz, Inc., Taft Building, Hollywood
Lew Golder—Howard Lang, Inc., 9122 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood
Walter Herzbrun Agency, 8983 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles
Hoffman-Schlager, Inc., 8776 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood
Sam Jaffe, Inc., 8555 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood
Ivan Kahn—Harry Green, 8776 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood
Al Kingston—Walter Meyers, Inc., 9120 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood
J. M. Lansinger, Inc., 6362 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood
M. C. Levee, 1300 N. Crescent Hts. Blvd., Hollywood
Harry H. Lichtig—Ben A. Englander, 6425 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood
Lyons, McCormick & Lyons, California Bank Bldg., Beverly Hills
Zeppo Marx, Inc., 8732 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood
William Morris Agency, 8511 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood
Orsatti Agency, 9121 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood
Small-Landau Company, 6331 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood
Laura D. Wilck, 6253 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood.

The agents on this list will not give criticisms of stories nor have they time to answer telephone calls or to receive visits from writers without appointments. Nor do they wish to be flooded with amateurish manuscripts. The writer who has something worthwhile to submit is advised to write to them giving a *very short* synopsis or outline of his story before sending his manuscript. If an agent asks to see it, send it by prepaid express or mail it and enclose postage for its return. Give the agent time enough to read your story and to try to sell it. Wait at least a month before you ask for a report on it.

If you have had any fiction published, mention it in your first letter to an agent.

Some authors send a synopsis, not more than six or seven pages in length, with their story and, provided the synopsis is well done, the agent will welcome it. Make as certain as you can that both story and synopsis comply with screen requirements before you submit it, and send a manuscript fresh and clean in appearance instead of one that suggests that it has been rejected a number of times.

If you have had limited writing experience, it will pay you to write several stories, then to go over the first again before submitting it. You may find that the additional practice will enable you to improve it considerably. If an agent gets two or three stories from you that are poorly written, trite or dull, he is very likely to return unopened all the others that you send. Why give him the idea that he can expect nothing but unacceptable stories from you? Spend plenty of time and effort on your first film story.

The trade (not "fan") motion-picture publications may supply you with information that will help to make your stories more opportune. They record changes in organization, policies and programs of the companies, and their analyses of box office returns reveal audience reactions. The better known trade papers include *Variety*, the *Hollywood Reporter*, the *Film Daily*, and the *Motion Picture Herald*.

Once you have been credited on the screen as the author of a story that wins any degree of success, you may write directly to the studio editors offering your manuscript and calling attention to the story you have sold, but you will in most cases find that you can sell more and get better prices by employing an agent.

Here is a list of editors at the head of the story departments in the larger studios:

Michel Kraike, Columbia Pictures Corp., 1438 N. Gower St., Hollywood
Merritt Hulburd, Samuel Goldwyn, Inc., 7210 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood
Edwin Knopf, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Corp., 10202 Washington Blvd., Culver City
Jeff Lazarus, Paramount Pictures, Inc., 5451 Marathon St., Hollywood
Robert Sparks, RKO Studios, 780 N. Gower St., Hollywood
D. Gordon, Republic Pictures Corp., 4024 Radford Ave., N. Hollywood
Val Lewton, Selznick International Pictures, Inc., Culver City
Julian Johnson, Twentieth Century–Fox Film Corporation, Westwood Hills
Charles Beahan, Universal Pictures Corp., Universal Studios, Universal City
Walter MacEwen, Warner Bros. Pictures Corp., Olive Ave., Burbank

An excellent method of selling stories to the studios is to have them published in magazine form first. This may sound like putting the cart before the horse, but it really is not because the motion-picture rights may bring far more than any magazine will pay, nor is it as difficult as it may sound. It is not essential that the story be published in a magazine of huge circulation. Naturally a story that has been selected for publication by a magazine of wide circulation will bring a higher price, but the fact that any editor has considered a story worth publishing indicates that it has some merit, and as its ownership is established by the copyright it may be sent directly to the story editor of a studio. If it is unusually good, from a motion-picture viewpoint, the chances are that some story scout will send it in also, but in any event it is advisable for the author to call attention to it.

If you have written a novel or biography, your publisher will see that it reaches the studios, except in those cases where the author retains the screen rights and prefers to offer them through an agent. A few book publishers have motion-picture departments, but the majority rely on agents who through experience and contacts know the needs of the studios and who will submit records of the book's sales and reviews showing its popularity. But even a best-seller will not interest the studios if it does not offer an acceptable screen story. Many a Book Club's choice or a prize-contest winner never reaches the screen because it falls under the censorship ban or because it lacks screenable material. In spite of all the praise given Shakespeare's works since he wrote them, they are not yet financially successful on the screen.

A non-fiction article or a book with a catchy title may be offered an agent for sale to the studios. Dorothea Brande's non-fiction book, *Wake Up and Live,* won so great popularity that a studio is said to have offered $22,500 for the right to use the title.

When the story editor receives your manuscript he assigns it to a reader who makes a five or six page synopsis of it and attaches to it an opinion as to its suitability for screening. If your story gets a good report from a reader, it is read by the story editor. The story editor does not have the final say as to whether a story shall be accepted or not, but he does have the right to select the stories that shall be submitted to the higherups. The apparent callousness of a few of these editors is the very natural result of having thousands of impossible manuscripts, books, stories and ideas hurled at them. They are victims of the widespread belief that anyone can sit down and dash off a salable story.

Ordinarily there is no need to be discouraged if your first film story is rejected. If a rejection leads you to improve your work, it may lead to a more permanent success. When your story comes back to you, check it against the mistakes suggested in the chapter on common errors and, if you still feel that it is interesting and adequately constructed, send it to another agent or editor. One agent may not see the possibilities in your story that may be seen by another, or he may refuse it because he caters to a particular studio which, at the time, needs a different type of story. If the second agent cannot sell it, it is unlikely that anyone else can. There is always, however, this hope: that a story interesting and properly constructed, but rejected now, may be in demand a year from now because it especially fits the abilities of some new star, or because it is in line with some new public interest, or because some new story editor sees possibilities in it.

It is most inadvisable to depend solely on the sale of film stories for an income until you have sold several of them and are certain that you have mastered both technique and the gathering of story material. In few other vocations could you gain the reward offered the successful film-story writer without several years of effort, and it is equally unlikely that you can in this. The writer who sells one story and never another is not uncommon. Deceived by an initial success, he feels that he has mastered the technique of writing and thereafter he fails to analyze his own work with sufficient care.

Once you have sold one or two originals that have made successful pictures, you may be eligible for employment at a studio. I received my first contract from a studio as a result of the success of stories I had sold to them as a free-lance writer.

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer has started an experiment in developing writers that is expected to provide additional opportunity for those who wish to write for the screen. The English and Dramatics departments of the California universities were asked to recommend young men who showed special writing ability. At the studio they were given a number of scripts and asked to select those that, in their opinion, offered the best material for the screen. The twelve who passed this test were engaged at a small salary and given every opportunity to learn "the picture business." They attended conferences, watched photoplays being made, and were assigned to work with experienced writers. Of the original twelve, six remain at this writing. It is too soon to tell whether this method can be counted upon to be of any real value to the studios, but if it is, undoubtedly other studios will adopt some such system for the purpose of encouraging the young writer.

You may as well accept the fact that the studio executives will see only the reader's synopsis of your story unless it runs not more than ten thousand words. Even if they purchase the story, they will read only the synopsis, or a treatment, or possibly a special version of the story prepared by a staff writer. The continuity writer probably will read the original, but undoubtedly will work from the treatment.

As in everything else in life, the human element may affect the sale of your story. It seems probable that many a good story has failed to make an impression because some reader made an inadequate synopsis. The reader's personal likes and dislikes, in spite of his efforts to be fair, may affect his report. Some of the studios pay sufficient salaries to get readers of education and experience, but others, unfortunately for themselves and for the public, pay small amounts and often are obliged to employ readers lacking in background and education and unable to recognize drama unless in stereotyped situations. The writer who can make an effective synopsis giving the highlights of his story, may secure a better opportunity for it than it otherwise would get.

The producer or the production committee makes the final decision as to the purchase of the story. After they buy it, the author has no control over it. It will be worked out by continuity writers, and the version of the story that appears on the screen will depend upon a hundred factors including producer, director, art director, actors, set designers, camera and sound technicians, electricians, et cetera. Do not be surprised when you see credited to you on the screen a story that you do not recognize. After a story has passed through the hands of writers and directors and committees, there may be nothing left of the original but the title.

Occasionally a writer may be asked to collaborate in writing the continuity of his own story. The chances are that he will not be, but if he is, for his own sake, he should walk softly and listen to the ideas of his collaborators and should not cling too insistently to his own, because the professional studio writer knows the limitations and the opportunities and demands of the screen far better than the outsider.

XIII. AUTHORS' RIGHTS AND PLAGIARISM

There is probably no hell for authors in the next world—they suffer so much from publishers and critics in this.

—BOVEE, "SUMMARIES OF THOUGHT"

ONCE you have invented a plot and characters and incorporated them into a finished story, you have created a piece of property with potential financial value. Its value lies in certain rights which the author holds: the publication, serialization, stage, screen, radio, foreign, and possibly other rights; and all disposal of the rights in his creation is vested solely in the author who may, if he wishes, dispose of the various rights separately. Whether it be novel, short story, play or original film story, its greatest financial value is likely to lie in its screen rights.

Of course, few stories offer salable rights in all these lines, but many pieces of fiction have both publication and film value and these rights often are sold separately. The original film story generally has so little value other than that which lies in its screenable qualities that the writer usually sells all rights in it to the studios. If it can be sold as a magazine story or serial, these rights may be retained by the author. As a matter of practice, they usually are sold before the screen rights are offered for sale.

A few of the motion-picture companies are beginning to demand a share of the proceeds of the publication rights when they purchase original fiction or when they contract for a writer's services; and writers' contracts offered by motion-picture companies sometimes contain the proviso that all a writer produces during his term of employment shall belong to the company.

Many book publishers now seek to share in the proceeds of the sale of screen rights appertaining to any material they buy. The publisher's view is that his exploitation of the book, his sponsorship, has brought it to the attention of the public and given it a popularity that makes it desirable in the eyes of the motion-picture executives. He knows that the motion-picture companies will offer much more for the published book than for the unpublished manuscript. Although a few firms contract for book rights only, a number of the publishers demand from ten to twenty-five percent of the sums received for motion picture rights, but in return nearly all of them use part of what they receive for additional advertising for the book. Of course, a writer of "best-sellers" can make his own terms with his publishers, while a beginner may be forced to concede something in order to get his work accepted.

It may be observed in passing that the revenue accruing from film rights is leading many novelists and short-story writers to plan their work with a view to its acceptability for screening. I believe that, eventually, publishers and editors will realize that the screen and the novel and the short story should be regarded as requiring different material and different treatment of it and that, except for the group that prefers the "pulps," the book and magazine public want something besides fast action in their reading matter. It does happen frequently that the writer who creates a well rounded and consistently planned story with no special effort to make it suitable for the screen, will find that through its characterization and plot it offers suggestions that make it of value as a basis for a photoplay.

It still seems necessary to advise writers that they should examine carefully every contract that disposes of any rights in their works, so that they may be sure just what they are selling. I have known writers, professionals as well as amateurs, to sign contracts after a casual reading only to find too late that they had signed away rights that they had intended to retain.

Both publishers' and motion-picture companies' contracts require an author to sign a statement to the effect that the story he offers is his own original work and they also place upon the author the burden of proving that the work is original should infringement be claimed. In view of this, it behooves the writer to take steps to place himself in a position where he can successfully contest such claims. Not only should he keep a carbon of his story, but also all preliminary drafts of it, his notes and outlines, and all other material that will tend to show that the story is his own creation. It is an excellent idea to date the notes and drafts when they are written.

There are several methods that may serve to aid in proving ownership and to protect unpublished manuscripts against plagiarism. One that may be useful in providing evidence of priority of authorship, at least, is that in which the author mails a registered copy of the manuscript to himself. When the manuscript returns through the mail, it is filed unopened with the registration receipt. Its post-office stamp with cancellation showing date, and the registration receipt, show at least the time when authorship was claimed.

The political code of California provides in Section 3202:

> Any person may file with the secretary of state a printed or typewritten copy of any lecture, sermon, address, dramatic composition, story or motion-picture scenario together with an affidavit attached thereto setting forth that such person is the author of the said printed or typewritten matter, and is entitled to all the rights and benefits accruing therefrom.

> Upon receipt of such printed or typewritten matter and the accompanying affidavit, the secretary of state shall file the same in his office, keeping a record thereof showing the date of filing, name of claimant, and the title of lecture or other printed or typewritten matter, and shall at the time of filing, issue to the claimant a certificate of filing under the great seal of state, which certificate shall set forth the facts so recorded.
>
> The said certificate of filing or a certified copy thereof together with a certified copy of the documents so filed shall be admitted in any court as prima facie evidence of the facts recited therein.
>
> A filing fee of five dollars shall be paid to the secretary of state for each certificate of filing.

Of course, this registration is legally effective only in the State of California, but a certificate obtained under this code may be offered as evidence of priority in court actions elsewhere.

The Screen Writers' Guild (one of the guilds of the Authors' League of America) located at 1655 North Cherokee Avenue, Hollywood, has a system of registration of screen scenarios, original stories and any form of manuscript not covered by the copyright law. The Guild states:

> The aim and purpose of the registration bureau is to give the author proof of the priority of his work over any pirated version and provides the author with evidence as to the date when he had had the complete work in his possession, and in case of suit for infringement, he will have little difficulty in proving priority of his work.
>
> The procedure for the registration is very simple. A copy of the manuscript is placed in an envelope with the registration number, date and time of receipt, and the author, or the person requesting registration on behalf of the author, signs this envelope which is then filed. An entry is then made in the Guild's records. No manuscripts are surrendered except under absolute proof of ownership or upon a court order.

This system of registration was first maintained for members only, but now is open to all writers. The cost to non-members is $1 and to members fifty cents. Copies for submission to studios or agents are stamped free of charge up to and including ten copies.

The registration bureau has proved of great service to the Commission on Conciliation and Arbitration of The Screen Writers' Guild in settling disputes and charges of plagiarism between writer and writer, and writer and producer, and is used almost exclusively by members of the Guild in protecting original material and also by many studios in protecting original material written by their own staff writers.

The Authors' League of America also has a Registration Bureau at 9 East 38th Street, New York City, but it is maintained for its members only. Its rules for registration are as follows:

Manuscripts will be registered for a period of ten years by the above bureau for a fee of $1.00 per registration. Within the tenth year a renewal of registration may be made for another five years upon payment of an additional fee of fifty cents. No script will be accepted for registration unless the following rules are strictly complied with:

1. Each manuscript must be enclosed in a regular registration envelope, which will be supplied to members upon demand.
2. Only synopses, scenarios, ideas and outlines may be registered. No full length manuscript will be accepted.
3. Information requested must be plainly written on the face of the envelope.
4. Each envelope must be *sealed* with *sealing wax*.
5. All information required and the actual act of sealing must be done by the person requesting registration or his authorized representative. It is not proper to ask employees of the League to do these things. The office will be obliged to return to

the sender any envelopes which are not properly filled out and sealed.

6. Remittance of $1.00 must accompany each manuscript.
7. Remittance and sealed envelope containing script must be enclosed in another envelope addressed as follows:

Registration Bureau
The Authors' League of America, Inc.
9 East 38th Street
New York, N. Y.

8. Postage must be fully prepaid.

A receipt card bearing date, registration number, title of script, etc., will be mailed to the writer immediately upon receipt of the manuscript at this office. Three certificates of registration which may be pasted on the author's copies of his scripts will be supplied. A charge of five cents will be made for each additional certificate. It is important to remember that the aim of the Registration Bureau is to prove priority of ownership and that priority cannot be proved if the manuscript is shown to a publisher or a producer *before* it is actually received and registered at the League office.

If the author has no supply of Registration Bureau envelopes on hand and if the need for submitting the manuscript to a purchaser is so immediate and urgent as to make it impossible to wait for proper envelopes to be supplied, an ordinary manila envelope, 9½ x 4⅛ inches, may be used by filling out its face with all the necessary information just as if it were an official Registration Bureau envelope.

The prices paid for screenable fiction have encouraged the practice of plagiarism and infringement by those who seek to profit from the works of others, and conversely to all too-frequent and baseless claims by acateurs that their ideas have been stolen.

Plagiarism is "to steal or purloin and use as one's own the ideas, words, artistic production, et cetera of another's; to use without due credit the ideas, expressions or productions of another." Literary *piracy* is "any unauthorized appropriation and reproduction of another's production, invention or conception; literary or artistic theft." When the theft is of material that has been copyrighted, it is termed *infringement*. Specifically, infringement covers "the unlawful manufacture, use or sale of copyrighted matter."

To maintain that a literary property has been plagiarized or that the author's copyright in it has been infringed, he must be prepared to prove that the property is his own in the sense that it was original with him and that his rights have been taken or infringed without his consent. Only a study of the legal cases pertaining to this subject will make clear what is original in the legal sense, but, generally, fiction must be wholly the work of the author claiming it as his own, except for that material which he takes from public domain. It is necessary also to produce evidence that the person accused had opportunity to examine the story he is suspected of having plagiarized, and also to show the similarities in the original and the allegedly plagiarized version.

Not all of a story is protected from plagiarism or infringement. Neither the Copyright Act nor common law will serve to hold theme, or idea, as the sole property of the author. His plot, that is, the particular combination of incidents that make up the story, belongs to him, but not the separate incidents. These seem to be available to anyone who cares to use them, provided that he does not use the same sequence, combination or wording in which he finds them.

The courts have held that a copyright "does not give a monopoly in any incident in a play," but that no one without permission may "substantially copy a concrete form in which the circumstances and ideas have been developed, arranged and put into shape." It should be clear, however, that the taking of plot sequence or other protected material, if it is at all recognizable as the original, is still theft even if it is expressed in different language. Backgrounds are not protected except in respect to the particular language describing them. If a writer wishes to set the scenes of his story in China, he is under no compulsion to go to China and thus to secure a wholly original impression. He may give a version of China as he has received it from his reading, but his wording and the combination of the material should be his own.

Titles are not protected unless they are part of a copyrighted work and not always then unless they have gained an especial value through advertising or publicity. *Anthony Adverse,* in all probability, would be protected, while *The Wild Party* or *It Happened One Night* would not. Books of fact are not protected under copyright, but in case of books of personal exploration, adventure or travel it seems probable that if the taking is so material as to damage the commercial value of the original, civil action would be allowed.

Distinction should be made between *incident* or simple event, and a *situation,* which involves the relation of affairs or circumstances at a moment of action. One who takes a situation invented by another may be guilty of plagiarism.

The particular crisis, problem, predicament, on which a story is based, and its climax, would seem to be protected by law and also specific scenes. The courts have held that the appropriation of a part which is protected by law is no less infringement than the appropriation of the entire work. Piracy may consist in appropriating some of the action of a play without any of the words. In any case, however, the appropriation must be substantial. It must be more than just a few lines or a single incident.

The varying or coloring of pirated material will not constitute a defense against the charge of infringement. The fact that a plagiarist attempts to disguise stolen matter by changes of name or location, by varying incident slightly, or by omitting part of the original will not relieve him of liability. Perhaps the most damning evidence outside of the theft of specific language is the copying of the errors or mistakes found in the original.

Plagiarism, especially if done by a clever writer, adept at disguising his takings, is difficult to prove. The courts, in addition to considering whatever opportunity the accused had to obtain the material he is alleged to have stolen, will consider evidence showing the similarity of theme, plot, idea, incident, action and language, and priority of writing and use.

A study of suits in plagiarism seems to reveal that authors, generally amateurs, are far too hasty in claiming plagiarism and in rushing to court about it. As a matter of fact, the tyro should be more concerned over the danger of committing plagiarism than of having his own work stolen. The beginner who attempts plagiarism may keep out of court, but he is taking the one course that surely will stunt his own power of self-expression.

The aim of the writer never should be to get specific material from the writings of others, but to use them only to stimulate his own imagination; for he who writes without drawing very largely upon his imagination is not producing fiction. At this stage of the craft of writing, it seems probable that almost every possible human experience has been written about not once, but many times. The best a writer can hope to do is to select, from the material available to all, that which is as little hackneyed as possible, and to arrange it in new and interesting combinations. The most important thing in any piece of writing is the spirit of the author: the particular life, the particular flavor, that he alone can give while writing his own interpretation of more or less common experiences; and plagiarism of these never can be wholly concealed. Shakespeare has been called "an unconscionable thief of both background and plot material," but he utilized them as a frame for such an unusual expression of genius that his finished creations are considered highly original.

It is only the very inexperienced writer who will not admit that coincidental similarity is common in the selection and use of story material. And it is always the amateur who makes the claim of plagiarism without checking his own story to see how much of it lies in the public domain—with the disconcerting result that more than once writers making the accusation of plagiarism have discovered that they themselves have been guilty of it. Coincidence accounts for much of what at first sight appears to be plagiarism. There is ample evidence that the minds of authors working from common sources and using common material may use the material in the same way and show great similarity of plot and dialogue. Often current events, episodes, newspaper stories and other sources open to all will suggest a plot to several writers. Naturally, the stories will resemble one another, but there is no question of deliberate plagiarism.

A frequent happening in plagiarism suits is the production of evidence showing that the plot or material in question has been used many times before the plaintiff wrote the story he claims as an original. There is also what may be called unconscious plagiarism; and while, to maintain that felonious plagiarism was committed, some evidence of intent must be shown, the writer who has unwittingly and quite unintentionally committed plagiarism may find himself liable in a civil action. Such cases arise from the faulty memory of an avid reader who, years previously, may have read a story which he no longer recalls, but subconsciously its situations or its wording remains to be drawn up when he conceives a plot in harmony with it.

I recall a case in which a professional writer wrote what was, as far as he was concerned, an absolutely original story. Before his story was published, he was amazed to have called to his attention a book, published some years previously in which was a story so like his own in its characters, complication and detail as to suggest very strongly that his was based upon it. Yet this author, as far as he can determine, had never read nor heard of the story so closely resembling his own.

The likelihood of having to defend themselves against claims of plagiarism has caused book and magazine publishers and motion-picture companies to adopt a form of contract which requires the writer to pay all damages arising from any verdict of plagiarism.

The securing of copyright protection for published matter is so generally taken care of by magazine companies or publishers that little space need be given to it here. It may be said, however, that some organizations of writers are working to secure a copyright law that will provide more definite and wider protection than that now offered. The Berne convention in 1887 established the International Copyright Union for mutual protection in all countries, and in 1928 the convention agreement was revised. At this writing, however, the United States is not a member of the convention; a condition arising largely from the insistence of American book manufacturers that United States copyright protection be withheld from any book not printed in America. At present, an American author or his publisher has to register his work separately in the various countries having copyright laws. If the United States were a member of the Berne convention, the American author would be protected automatically in all the other countries included in its membership.

The possession of copyright is *prima facie* evidence of authorship, but the application of the copyright law is solely a matter for the courts.

Story manuscripts, scenarios or other unpublished literary material have full protection, under Common Law, against plagiarism; and motion pictures, that is, the complete photographic film, can be copyrighted; but there is no provision in the copyright law of the United States for copyright registration of unpublished fiction except that which is in "full dramatic form"; therefore, film stories, synopses, novels, biographies and short stories *in manuscript form* cannot be copyrighted under the present law. Nothing in the Copyright Act, however, affects the right of an author of an unpublished manuscript to prevent and to obtain damages for the plagiarism of his work. "Full dramatic form" requires an acting version with the use of dialogue, acts, scenes and stage directions. The Copyright Act does not provide for the registration of titles alone, not even those of dramatic compositions, for the purpose of securing the exclusive right to use them. Nor will it protect a plot idea. It will protect only a particular presentation of it.

At present the term for which copyright gives protection is twenty-eight years. An additional term of twenty-eight years is allowed when application for such renewal is made within one year prior to the expiration of the original term. In event of the author's demise, his relations, "next of kin," or his executor may secure the renewal. When the second twenty-eight years allowed them for copyright protection has expired, American publications automatically fall into public domain.

Material that falls within what is known as public domain is common property open to use by all. It includes what may be called general knowledge, that is, information and experience available to mankind generally; also all facts, no matter to what they relate; all public documents and publications, ancient and modern, and all that material which has sifted down through generations in the form of history, tradition, myth, fable, legend and proverb, as well as speech and other mannerisms, and habits and customs.

It should be observed that these things are free to all as *material,* but when some writer uses them in specific form, the particular use he makes of them cannot legally be copied, nor may his particular language be used without his consent.

All those plot incidents that arise from a common source and any of the thirty-six or more fundamental plots are in public domain, and you might use the plot idea of *Romeo and Juliet* in a thousand settings, times and places, and never once infringe on Shakespeare's rights, even if he were alive today.

Historical material in public domain is endless. *Mutiny on the Bounty, Queen Elizabeth, Mary of Scotland, Richelieu, The Scarlet Empress, Last Days of Pompeii, Abraham Lincoln* and the stories of the American pioneers show the richness of this material and also that only the screen can do it justice.

But here again, the writer is warned to do his own research among original sources. Subject-matter that is in the public domain must not be used in the same way as another writer has used it. Anyone may write about historical characters, but there must be no infringement of copyrighted material or piracy of material protected by common law. A court has ruled that a writer "may work on the same original materials, but he cannot exclusively and evasively use those already collected and embodied by the skill and industry and expenditures of another." Nor can the writer use "the same series of events to excite . . . the same emotions in the same sequences."

Inasmuch as historical figures may have left descendants, the writer is advised to exercise care to give them no opportunity to invoke the law of libel. In *The Covered Wagon,* a scout was depicted in actions that reflected on the historical person he represented, and a descendant of this person sued the makers of the picture for damages. *Zaza* had been presented on the stage for years and also in a photoplay, but when a second screen version was produced, a Frenchman, whose family name had appeared in the play from its first presentation, claimed damages. Libel is a crime in every state and is punishable by a fine or imprisonment, and it is a wrong for which the injured party may claim damages through civil action.

XIV. ADAPTATION

If an adapter would plan out in scenario form the mere story of the novel he wishes to adapt for the stage; would then transfer to his scenario only so much of the novel as perfectly fits the needs of the stage; and finally, with the aid of the original author, would rewrite the portion which can be used only in part, and with him compose certain parts entirely anew, we should have a much larger proportion of permanently successful adaptations.

—GEORGE PIERCE BAKER, "DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE"

AN adaptation may be defined as an expanded and dramatized version of the essence of a novel, stage play or biography, written in film-story form. Adaptations are made not only of novels, stage plays and biographies, but of historical episodes, of operas, in fact of any copyrighted material that can be made into a film story. A story based upon the life of an historical or legendary character and comprising only material legally available to all persons, is not an adaptation, but an original. Just what matter is available to all is discussed in the chapter on authors' rights and plagiarism.

Inasmuch as adaptations are made of copyrighted material, they cannot be offered for sale unless the copyright owner has given his permission and for this reason they generally are made by writers employed by the studios. But he who aspires to become a professional film-story writer, and the writer who wishes to adapt his own novels or magazine stories for screen use should know how they are made. Contrary to popular opinion, it often is much harder to write an adaptation than to write an original story. Novels, at least the best ones, rarely are written with the sole idea of offering material for a motion picture. It is true that some adaptations retain only a title and an outstanding character, but if the book to be adapted happens to be a "best-seller," the public expects to see in the screen version much of what was expressed in the novel. If the book happens to be one of the widely known and well loved classics, audiences may resent even those changes necessary to make it into a coherent photoplay. Anyone who has ever tried to vary a Mother Goose story told to a child who has heard it dozens of times has undoubtedly found himself corrected and requested to supply the regular version, and the attitude of the public towards its favorite stories is much the same. Then, rather unreasonably, when it has been given the story in such fashion that it knows "what comes next," it may be surprised to find that it lacks freshness.

Those who have read *Anthony Adverse* and also have seen the screen version of it can discover some of the difficulties in adapting. To reduce this extremely long novel to a form that would tell the story in about ninety minutes required great compression and the limiting of the plot very largely to the essentials of Anthony's biography. Large sections of the plot had to be telescoped. The many characters had to be sharply outlined and given significance. The somberness had to be lightened; a touch of happiness was needed in the ending. The adapter had to discard a considerable portion of the book, but succeeded in developing and keeping an effective mood throughout that gave the film version distinction and dignity.

Lost Horizon, in book form, interested thousands of persons, but the picture version had to be adapted so that it would interest millions, and to reach this larger group only those incidents and attitudes that had meaning for mankind in general could be used. The astute director of this picture, in referring lightly to the longing of many a man for a "little chicken-farm," undoubtedly knew that for great numbers of movie-goers this would suggest perhaps better than anything else the heart's desire that Shangri-la came to mean to the hero of the film. The tone and the fantasy that were the charm of the book could not be translated into the objective form that is necessary to gain widespread interest.

Not all novels offer material susceptible of adaptation. Generally speaking, only one-third of a novel represents action suitable for picturization; the remainder is description of one kind or another or accounts of thought processes. The psychological novel, the one that is "a slice of life" without any structural form, may offer neither plot, suspense, nor coherent characterization. The adapter may have to build an entire plot and new situations to express it and to invent new characters to displace those who wandered through the novel and disappeared without having fulfilled any purpose.

The screen version must move at a faster pace than do most novels; it must omit involved character analysis, dissertation and irrelevant comment—in fact, everything that is not pertinent to the plot. What appears to be dramatic when read may not be so when screened because the drama may not really be depicted or developed in the book; it may merely be suggested. Then, too, events in a novel may be made acceptable to the reader through the use of voluminous explanation, but events on the screen must be self-explanatory or else made clear by adjoining scenes. Occasionally, novels have too many characters, too many episodes, but more frequently they are short of acting situations. The emotional content may be insufficient or the characterization too diffuse.

The first step in adapting is to know the important characters thoroughly; then to dig out the essential plot material and, while doing this, to make a note of episodes and incidents and good lines that you may be able to work into the adapted version. The plot will need to be built up and sharpened, but you can work these incidents and lines from the novel into the new material that must be added. Avoid those parts where nothing happens even though they make good reading.

The thing that, in any event, should be retained is the flavor, the mood of the novel and, of course, its purpose. By adhering to these essentials, you have more freedom in adding new matter or rearranging the plot material. Decide what definite impression the novel makes and unless it happens to be too depressing, convey the same effect in the screen version.

There rarely is any excuse for distorting a novel into something unrecognizable or for wrongly interpreting an author's ideas or twisting his story into an imitation of some current success, for by using the characters, the chief plot incidents and by keeping the mood of the novel, you may even write a new story that will be recognizably related to the book. Let your new situations arise from character traits and they will have an obvious relation to the original plot.

Making a short synopsis of the novel is one way of finding out how much screenable material it offers. If it cannot be told in a synopsis that consists almost entirely of action and that fills not more than a page, the chances are that an almost entirely new story will have to be written.

Not all biographies can be adapted. Those that lend themselves to screen versions involve a strong personality who has done interesting things, and invariably they require the adapter to build a plot around this figure. Adapting biography or history for screen use necessitates the segregating of all episodes and events that offer dramatic value and the building of them into a coherent sequence. It may require also the dramatizing of all kinds of undramatic, if important, public documents, records and accounts. The facts offered by a biography may prove to be very limiting, and the life of the subject may be too well known to allow the adapter to invent an entirely new one for him. Generally, it is most important that the original characterization and the important events that mark the career of the individual who is portrayed, be adhered to and accurately depicted, and the writer should know as much about him as is possible in order not to offend those who are familiar with the records of his life. To tamper with the characters of a novel may annoy only the author, but to deviate too far from the established reputation of an historical character brings unfortunate repercussions on all concerned. Incidents may be changed or added if they are in character, but it would seem to be unethical to add anything that suggests unpleasant traits not possessed by the subject. Adaptations of the lives of great historical figures which are merely foul attacks without factual basis have incurred a clamor for censorship and occasionally have caused libel suits. Adaptations that drape such figures in a haze of sentiment may be less liable to suit, but sometimes seem equally reprehensible.

While the adapter should stick to the essential facts as given in accepted versions of history, he should realize that a few well known facts will support a great deal of probability that agrees with the characterization and the period. Because the audience is offered the few facts that it knows about an historical character, it will assume that the additional matter it is offered concerning him is largely true. The historical film story requires honest and thorough research to give it the real color of the period and of the persons involved. While a biography may give a multitude of petty details in its delineation of character, the screen version requires only a clear presentation of the particular traits that marked the subject whose life is to be pictured.

It is never safe to assume that the audience will know much of the historical personalities, era or background involved. The adaptation must be complete in itself and must contain all that is necessary to make its meaning clear. When at a loss for additional material, the adapter always can study the characteristics of his subject and consider what complications they might involve him in at the particular time and place to be pictured. If, for example, the protagonist is an irascible choleric Colonial governor, the adapter may consider what situations, what scenes, might be precipitated by his peppery temper as he went about his duties as governor. These scenes may involve some character previously active in the plot and easily may be made relevant parts of the story.

One problem that confronts the writer when making adaptations of novels or biographies written generations ago arises from the need to make the characters act as if they were motivated by principles and feelings that appear reasonable to this generation. They need to be made to think in a manner that seems rational now. Inhibitions, scruples and attitudes that were normal fifty or more years ago may have to be modified if they are not to seem merely silly to a modern audience.

New dialogue, condensed, high lighted and suited to the revamped plot almost always is required for an adaptation. It may be written by the adapter or merely suggested by him and completed by a professional dialogue writer. Much of the dialogue in biographies neither advances action, strengthens characterization nor offers comedy, and it may discuss the author's theories on various subjects and so be useless for the screen. Dialogue that relates to important historical events may be unintelligible to an important section of the motion picture audience. It is the spirit and style of the dialogue that the adapter needs to retain rather than the wording. New dialogue, of course, should be in accord with character, period and place.

He who would write historical adaptations must gather historical facts, but the audience must be given far more than these facts. It wants their meaning in emotional terms; it wants to know how the historical personages felt about the events in which they were involved and how they expressed their feelings. It wants their particular and personal reactions. In adapting biography or fiction, the writer, of course, is justified in using whatever other material is available in public domain, and in reference and special books on costumes, periods, wars, customs, etc. Patient and thorough research had much to do with the success of such photoplays as *Disraeli*, *The House of Rothschild*, *Cardinal Richelieu* and *Mutiny on the Bounty*.

The historical adaptation must be more interesting and forceful and appealing than the original film story because it is what is known as a "costume picture." The cost of the research required to design sets, costumes and detail without anachronism, as well as the costs of these things themselves, make such pictures expensive. Once in a while there is an exception. *The Hoosier Schoolmaster* fell into the "costume picture" period, but because of the simplicity of its setting and costumes, it was produced at little expense and with considerable profit. Lately there have been produced many of the classics which fall in the "costume picture" group. In some cases, their popularity with producers was based on the fact that classics generally are viewed leniently by the censors or, in many cases, offer nothing censorable.

Adaptation of a stage play involves some problems differing from those found in adapting a biography or novel. We have grown used to a certain limitation of setting in the stage play. The action may involve many persons and cover years, but the characters appear in only a few places, rarely more than five. The film version of a stage play, however, usually requires a much greater variety in its setting. The proportions of the action and dialogue in a stage play often are the reverse of those required by the screen, and many of the ideas conveyed through lines in the play must be given in new acting scenes in the film version. What can only be revealed through reminiscence on the stage can appear as present action on the screen; the adaptation may delve into the past and present causes while the stage play must start with a later event.

Not always are adaptations retitled solely because a new title has greater drawing power. Sometimes it is done to give the adapter freedom to write a version that differs considerably from the original. Adaptations retitled for one reason or another include one based on *East Lynne* which became *Ex-Flame*, and one on *La Gioconda* which appeared as *The Devil's Daughter. The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard* was renamed *Chasing Yesterday;* Barrie's *The Admirable Crichton* was changed to *Male and Female; La Tosca* to *The Song of Hate; Liliom* to *Trip to Paradise; The Jewels of the Madonna* to *Sin; The Cardboard Lover* to *The Passionate Plumber; Better Wife* to *Anybody's Woman; Dombey and Son* to *Rich Man's Folly;* and *The Interpreter's House* to *I Want My Man.*

Adaptations are made in film-story form without technical language or "shooting" directions.

XV. CONTINUITY

Drama consists of passion, which gives the actor his opportunity; and that passion must progressively increase, or the actor, as the piece proceeded, would be unable to carry the audience from a lower to a higher pitch of interest and emotion.

—R. L. STEVENSON, "LEARNING TO WRITE"

THE continuity is the transitional form between the film story and its picturization. It is an arrangement of the story in sequences of scenes or shots for photographing, written in technical form and language, and it makes possible the production of a succession of pictures with smoothly continuing action. It gives the setting, action and sound in each scene; the camera angles and maneuvers, and all information needed by the director and the actors. To the director, it is what the blueprint is to the architect; it is the plan from which he builds the picture. Not until the continuity is prepared can the cost of filming a picture be reckoned or the settings and costumes be designed. Continuity writing is generally done in consultation with producer and director and sometimes the camera experts, therefore, practically always, it is written by members of the studio staff.

It is fallacious to assume that the continuity writer merely cuts the story into scenes. He not only needs to be adept at plot-building and characterization, but he must possess unusual visual imagination, a strong sense of drama, much ingenuity, and a very considerable knowledge of screen photography. The more artistic perception and background he has, the more likely he is to present the story from its best angle. Unfortunately, continuity writers very frequently are so rushed that they must force a story into some pattern that has been accepted for that type, and thus much of the originality which the story possesses is destroyed.

He who wishes to become a professional continuity writer must obtain his training wherever and however he can, chiefly through the study of scripts and the study of technical effects in pictures, and by practice. He may get a motion-picture camera and a projector and produce his own pictures and although they will be silent, he may gain experience in selecting effective camera angles and scene connections. If he can submit a good sample of a continuity to some production manager, he may get employment in a studio in some minor capacity and progress to the point where he will be commissioned to do a continuity. I believe, however, that most of the professional continuity writers were fiction writers who gained their technical knowledge by experience in the studios.

The continuity writer often is required to write a treatment of the story before preparing the continuity. A treatment may be called a word-sketch, if the phrase is permissible, of the proposed photoplay. It is a version of the story that shows what characters he will stress, the viewpoint from which he proposes to write his continuity, what plot line he will follow, and what scenes are to be developed dramatically. A treatment gives the story from one particular angle and in one particular mood or manner. A single theme or plot sometimes may be developed into a slow tragedy, a fast comedy, a melodrama, or a mixture of these, but there will be one particular mode that will best express it. *The Kid* offers an example of a plot that might have been developed either as a comedy or a tragedy.

The treatment is written in ordinary story form in the present tense and with the dialogue barely suggested. It rarely consists of more than fifty pages. All scenes that cannot be made into "acting scenes" are discarded and also those that are too involved or too costly to set or to photograph. The treatment compresses the story that is too long so that it can be pictured in a certain number of reels. More often, however, it requires the insertion of additional material.

The staff writer is free to add or change the original in any way that he thinks will strengthen it dramatically, and often a good treatment makes it possible to produce what otherwise would be of little value. If the treatment is accepted by the producer, the continuity writer (sometimes more than one) proceeds to prepare the shooting script. This work will be interrupted very frequently by conferences with the producer, director and others, that may or may not result in anything helpful to the script. Authors of novels and plays are sometimes, but not as often as is usually assumed, invited to collaborate on continuities based on their works. As a rule, they find the continuity a completely new and difficult medium.

The continuity gives the action and directions in single-spaced typing across the page, and the dialogue and other sound indented and double-spaced. Camera directions go at the head of each shot. With the action is included whatever information is essential to enable the actor to interpret the character he is to play. (See the sample continuity at the end of this volume.) Each camera shot is numbered and this is important as scenes are rarely shot in consecutive order. All scenes using a certain set, say an interior, may be shot one after another, although the scenes themselves may be at opposite ends of the finished picture. With each sequence of shots is given the location or setting and the time, if specific, and also the type of shot or camera angle.

The inexperienced writer is apt to drag out the first part of his continuity and the precipitating incidents to great length, to give too little space to the dramatic complications, and to let the latter part of the continuity become sketchy. As a matter of fact, a continuity has a definite rhythm. Its continuing action is not all at the same pace or stress. There are scenes with unemotional action; some are unhurried and given more footage, that is, more time. The scenes that carry the climax, or display highly emotional action, or arouse suspense or excitement, may be shortened, that is, given less footage.

Emotional intensity may be increased by showing a number of short scenes with fast action and by changing settings and camera angles or ranges. Short scenes one after the other give the effect of a disturbed unsettled condition. The slow and fast, the long and short, should alternate in pleasing order. No single scene should be long enough to tire an audience. If it seems advisable to use a scene that takes a long time, it may be possible to break it and to flash back to some other incident and then to return to the main scene. Each scene in the continuity should bring the action nearer the climax and the outcome, and should have a definite and particular purpose. Every bit of action should be scrutinized for its right to remain in the continuity. If it is not essential to build up the story to its climax or to the dénouement, or if it does not help to prove the story theme, it should be eliminated. Instead of using a long sequence to cover a particular set of circumstances or a period of time, all that is of any importance may be shown in a series of very short representative scenes that convey the idea, purpose or effect of the circumstances or period.

The continuity, very generally, is prepared as a vehicle for some particular star, therefore the principal role must be developed so that it gives the star the greatest possible acting opportunity consistent with the plot and with the necessity for varied interest. Not only the star's physical appearance, but his type of acting, his voice, his entire personality, should be considered so that his assets and abilities shall be fully employed. The actor is just as anxious for the success of the picture as the writer is, and he may have considerably more at stake. Give him or her something to "bite into," something to interpret, sometime to express, something to *feel*. Round out all the scenes so that they give more opportunity to the principals than to less important actors.

The picturization of the film story must be an entity. The scenes must, when pictured, be joined so smoothly without break in action that the audience gets the illusion of one continuous picture. When one scene or shot follows another without change of time, the continuity indicates this by the use of the words, "cut to." After a character is established in some situation that will occupy his time, but which would be boring for a spectator to watch, cut this scene and flash to some other having a relation to it; then cut that, and flash back to show the situation at a later time. Or you can flash from the hero to show how the villain is coming on in his dastardly scheming. The flashed-in situations as a rule should be quick shots of lesser importance than those which are cut. The flash also allows you to account for the secondary characters in the story and to keep them sufficiently before the audience.

The novelist and the short-story writer do the same thing when they introduce paragraphs with the word "meantime" or "during this time," et cetera, and just as the novel may turn back to present an incident occurring in the past, so in the photoplay flashes may present matter in retrospect. The human mind employs the cut and flash method in its ordinary thinking. It leaps a thousand years and from pole to equator with greater ease than even the motion picture.

Flashes should not be too close together and must not be allowed to distract attention from the main plot line. Some directors now avoid the use of the flash-back to a previous point in the story; they prefer that the story begin with earlier events in chronological sequence or else that the essential information concerning these earlier events be brought out in later action and dialogue. But the flash-back may be used to show a character's recollection of some important event or situation that occurred previously.

The cut and flash and fade-out make it unnecessary to include unimportant detail for the sake of connecting scenes. Fades mark the sections or divisions of the story. The fade-out finishes the end of one section and the fade-in introduces the next. When there is a definite break in time or a transition to another place as at the end of a sequence, the "fade-out" followed by a "fade-in" is used. A "fade-in" is the gradual appearance of a scene or a face, from darkness into light; a "fade-out" is the gradual disappearing of a scene. The "fade-out" also offers a means of slowing down action or of retarding pace; therefore it is not effective if used in a scene with the plot climax or in one that is expected to arouse excitement or suspense. In such scenes, the cut, which has the effect apparently of increasing the pace, is used. The cut and flash allow any secondary line of interest to be brought to the audience's attention. Go from the first plot line sequence to a sequence carrying the second plot line, find corresponding elements in the two and fade out and in from one to another.

Fades can jump any length of time if the lapse and its duration are made clear to the audience. Frequently, the necessity for a time lapse indicates poor plotting. In *The Ghost Goes West*, there is a time lapse indicating centuries. It is properly used because the events in the first period are directly responsible for the events in the second which occurs generations afterward. In the *House on 56th Street*, the passing of the years, during which the heroine is in prison, is shown by the shadow of a pendulum passing over newspaper headlines indicating the well known events which marked those years, interspersed with scenes showing her in prison and obviously growing older. The effect is that of smoothly continuing action.

Where a story says that months passed, the continuity may show a fade-out, but if the lapse is a matter of hours and minutes, a dissolve, a gradual blending of two scenes may be used. In the dissolve, however, the screen never reaches the blackness of a fade-out. The new scene appears before the old has vanished. The dissolve joins or combines scenes that are closely related. In the "lap dissolve," the dissolves are blended or overlapped. It may be used to introduce a change of place and, also, to allow thoughts, desires, memories, longings or hopes of a character to be indicated. On the film, dissolves may run from side to side or from top to bottom. A general shot may dissolve into a specific one, or vice-versa, or an exterior into an interior. Cuts, flashes, fade-ins, and fade-outs, and dissolves are done so cleverly through proper direction that the audience generally accepts the illusion suggested without noticing the mechanical means used to convey it.

The continuity writer should study camera distances so that he may know how to use effectively the close-up, the medium shot, the long shot, and the distance shot. A director often will use a greater variety of camera distances, but the continuity writer should be able to indicate at least these four.

Each shot is directed at the principal actor in the particular scene that is being photographed. The close-up is used to center complete attention on a person or subject. It is a photograph usually of a head or face and shoulders nearly filling the screen frame. It also may be used to display a letter or other object having considerable significance. A "medium close-up" is used to show the heads of two persons, or a large portion of a single figure. Actors, naturally, like the close-up as they occupy the eye of the camera, but it should be used with discretion as it stops the action of the story and sometimes it gives the effect of being entirely separate from the remainder of the picture. Endings and scenes of great emotional stress lend themselves effectively to the close-up.

The medium shot is used in photographing a small group of persons or a single person from the knees up and with some background.

The full shot takes in all of a room or street or other location and it utilizes the entire angle of the camera lens focused for distance. It is used in photographing groups of persons in an interior and for out-of-door scenes that include actors. The distance shot takes figures or objects at a long range.

When a wide area of scenery, or a flight, say of airplanes, or a chase, is to be shown, a "pan" or panorama shot is used. In this shot, the camera is swung in a circular horizontal movement. Slow-motion and fast-motion photography are used mostly in comedy of the slapstick type.

A double exposure combines two images. It is an aid in fantasy and in pictures in which a single actor plays two roles. A character's thoughts or his emotions in contrast with his outward expression may be indicated through the use of a double exposure.

Variety in the type of camera shots adds interest to the picture. Changing the camera location or camera angles varies the scenery. These angles, however, may depend largely on the arrangement of sets or locations and therefore usually are decided upon by the director, camera expert and continuity writer working together.

A parade may be caught by a "dolly shot" during which the camera, on a truck or on a "dolly" or a raft, moves along with the action. Boom shots allow a scene to be photographed from above. In a trucking shot, the camera moves toward or away from whatever is being photographed, while in a tilting shot it moves up or down as may be required to follow the action. A tilting shot is used to photograph an airplane rising from the ground and flying into the distance. The continuity writer often indicates these shots by the phrases, "Camera follows ——" or "Camera moves up to ——."

Split screen shots, or transparencies, photograph two sets of action at different times on the same background. These are cut and joined to present continuous action by two objects. For example, a shot may be taken of hunters riding through a woods, and a separate shot of a terrified fox bolting through the same woods may be imposed to show the hunters in close pursuit.

There are innumerable camera angles and maneuvers which may be worked out by camera expert and director, and while many professional continuity writers use no greater variety than is indicated here, the more the writer knows of camera technique the more effective he can make his script.

An experienced continuity writer may easily be able to indicate from what angle the shot is to be made; to indicate from what direction the scene can be most effectively shot. The beginner, however, may find it helpful to make a drawing of his scene and of his actors' positions in order to check his photographic composition. Of course, all scenes, all action, must be kept within camera limits, but the camera experts have various ways of "cheating" on distances, and several cameras with lenses of different ranges and width of angle may be used at one time to procure a wider range of effects.

Lighting generally is a matter for director, electrician and camera expert, but inasmuch as light may be used as a symbol, usually of something spiritual, or to create a special mood, or to make a setting eerie or weird, the continuity writer should indicate it when it has any special significance. Very soon the continuity writer may be expected to indicate significant color.

When the continuity script is outlined, it should be checked for length. The scenes may run a hundred or more to the reel. Sequences or groups of scenes that fall together naturally usually run four or less to the reel. Each sequence should be a definite picture complete in action and characterization, not too long nor too short, and consistent with the mood the story is to express. It must carry the story on, and in it interiors and exteriors may be arranged in pleasing alternation.

See that the star is given something to do whenever he is on the set. Take him off the set when the other characters have something important to do and whenever the action does not require his presence. Bring an actor back to a scene from a direction opposite to that in which he left. If the plot calls for a group or a crowd or mob of persons, make one or more figures stand out noticeably, for a group is never a flat mass.

Directors have their particular likes and dislikes in the matter of shooting scenes, and the continuity writer should adapt his script to the preferences of the director who is to make it into a picture. Directing is the step above continuity writing and this is an additional reason for the writer to learn all he can about it.

The finished continuity usually goes to a production committee who decide what is to be added or subtracted or changed. These changes made, it may or may not be revised again. In his efforts to do everything possible to secure a picture that will be a financial success, the producer may assign other writers to work on the script in the hope that they can add drama and interest to it. Sometimes they do, but many a time a good story grows diffused and flat when too many minds work on it.

When the shots or "takes" are assembled and joined, the cutting and editing begin. The director usually shoots extra footage to allow for editing. As a rule, entire takes or scenes are not cut out, but a little is taken out here and a little there until everything that drags or can be eliminated is removed. It takes skill to make sure that nothing is cut that is essential to the story. Next comes the "montage," the skillful fitting of the film sections so that the scenes will appear as one continuous picture, with each scene leading naturally to the next and all leading to the climax. The term "montage" is also applied to a group of jumbled or disconnected flashes which, taken as a whole, convey some particular idea. Previewed at this stage, the picture may reveal scenes that are lacking in interest, or that are inconsistent in mood, or that have various other defects which may make it necessary to shoot and substitute additional scenes.

MARCO POLO

The scenario, *Marco Polo,* by Robert Sherwood—a Samuel Goldwyn production—was selected from those available at this writing as the best example of scenario form and content.

The story on which it is based concerns the life of a Venetian nobleman who became a trader and adventurer in Cathay some six hundred years ago. Not only because of the ancient background and customs involved, but also because the story of Marco Polo is largely legendary and concerned with reports of life in the Orient at that time rather than with his personal affairs, the building of a scenario offered considerable difficulty.

In his script, Mr. Sherwood has succeeded in making this almost mythical adventurer a very real character, gallant, courageous, and wise, and also in presenting the splendor and magnificence of the court of Kubla Khan and the colorful romance and peril of Polo's ventures in that long ago era in far away Cathay. And all this has been built into scenes that will be convincing and impressive when viewed by a motion-picture audience.

Not only the writer of film stories, but all those interested in picture production will find it helpful to study the dramatic action, characterization, dialogue and atmosphere as presented in this scenario.

MARCO POLO

A FOREWORD will make it clear that while our characters are real our story makes no claim to historical accuracy, etc.

FADE IN:
1. DIM LONG SHOT—VENETIAN CANAL—EXT. DAY (STOCK SHOT)
Over it the superimposed title:

IN VENICE—SEVEN HUNDRED
YEARS AGO—THE TRAFFIC FLOWED
AS SMOOTHLY AS IT DOES TODAY

The Title disappears and we stay for a second on a shot of Venice. Underneath is music of a Gondolier singing tenor.
LAP DISSOLVE TO:
2. LEDGER OF POLO BROTHERS
The ledger is inscribed:

POLO BROTHERS
MERCHANTS AND IMPORTERS
1273-1274 A. D.
(*Date will be checked*)

CAMERA PULLS BACK to disclose . . .
3. INT. POLO BROTHERS' HOUSE
In the room is a table around which are seated four or five business men; also Maffeo Polo who is speaking. Nicolo Polo, bored and slightly irritated with the conversation, is looking out of the window.

MAFFEO: We must open up new trade, or as merchants, as business men, we will perish. The channels of our Mediterranean world have run dry.

SECOND BUSINESS MAN: And *you* have milked them dry, Maffeo Polo.

CUT TO:

4. CLOSE SHOT—NICOLO AT WINDOW

NICOLO, *without turning:* And you. (*he calls out of the window*) Have you found him?

CUT TO:

5. MED. CLOSE SHOT—BINGUCCIO

In gondola. Shooting down, no set is visible except a few colored poles in the water. A gondolier is in the back of the gondola.

BINGUCCIO: No, and I have called on most of Venice (*carefully brushes off his clothes*) and half ruined my new clothes.

6. CLOSE SHOT—NICOLO IN WINDOW

NICOLO: Call on the rest of Venice—and ruin the other half.

CUT TO:

7. MED. SHOT—GROUP AT TABLE

As Maffeo points to the turned figure of Nicolo.

MAFFEO: My brother has told you. The solution lies to the East. To Cathay—to the land of China. It is there that we must send an Ambassador.

THIRD BUSINESS MAN: Who?

NICOLO, *without turning:* My son. Marco Polo.

8. CLOSE SHOT OF THE TABLE

As two of the business men rise, shocked. The third one laughs.

FIRST BUSINESS MAN: That is a sound choice, Nicolo. He knows nothing of buying and selling, but he knows something of gambling. He knows nothing of commercial treaties, but he knows something of women. He knows nothing of work. . . .

CUT TO:

9. MED. SHOT—NICOLO MOVING TO TABLE

NICOLO, *sharply:* Did you think our transaction in Paris was a good one?

SECOND BUSINESS MAN, *laughs:* The best. I know. I tried for it.

NICOLO: It was Marco who got it for us. (*smiles*) On a journey supposedly to taste the wines of Burgundy. Did you like our arrangements with the Greeks?

THIRD BUSINESS MAN: Too well.

NICOLO: It was Marco who made them for us.

FIRST BUSINESS MAN, *irritably:* You mean it was Marco visiting the Greek ladies.

NICOLO: That was what you were supposed to believe—and, fortunately, you believed it. (*sharply*) You may talk here for hours. But it is Marco who will go.

CAMERA PANNING WITH HIM he moves to a table near the window, on which are lying, strewn about, silks, pieces of jade, perfume, porcelain, sculpture.

You may know buying and selling. But you are fat and insensitive. (*picks up a beautiful little vase*) The strange people that made these are neither.

10. CLOSE SHOT—BALCONY OF A HOUSE

In the f.g. a section of Binguccio's gondola appears. (No water needed)

BINGUCCIO, *shouting up toward balcony:* Master Marco Polo. Master Marco Polo.

A beautiful girl appears on the balcony.

Is Master Marco Polo there?

GIRL, *holding up two fingers, sadly:* Not for *two* days.

BINGUCCIO: Thank you, madam.

The gondola moves on.

DISSOLVE TO:

11. BALCONY OF SECOND HOUSE

Binguccio's gondola comes into Shot again. Two girls are sitting on the balcony.

BINGUCCIO, *irritably:* Have *you* seen Master Marco Polo?

SECOND GIRL, *looking toward the first girl—sweetly:* Not today. But I *think*—this evening.

Binguccio clucks in annoyance and motions to the gondolier to go on.

DISSOLVE TO:

12. CLOSE SHOT—BALCONY OF THIRD HOUSE

This one has a low balcony. Binguccio's voice is heard offscene.

BINGUCCIO'S VOICE, *plaintively:* Master Marco Polo. Master Marco Polo.

The gondola comes into view. Binguccio's voice is getting squeaky.

Master Marco Polo.

A girl comes out on the balcony.

By any chance is Master Marco Polo here?

GIRL: He's here, but he cannot be disturbed.

The girl turns, begins to walk in.

Marco my love, someone here to see you.

CUT TO:

13. INT. GIRL'S ROOM

Binguccio's voice is heard.

BINGUCCIO'S VOICE: Master Marco Polo. Come out. I am here.

Three or four men, and Marco, are playing dice.

Note: The dice must be strange; bigger or fancier than the ones we know today, in order to avoid too much of a gag.

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14. CLOSE SHOT OF THE TABLE

As Marco turns, hears Binguccio's voice, rises, bows, gathers in the large sums of gold coins in front of him, as the others gape. Marco and girl start out to balcony.

15. MED. SHOT—MARCO AND GIRL ON BALCONY

MARCO, *taking the girl's arm and looking down at Binguccio:* I thought I knew that squeaky voice.

16. MED. SHOT—BINGUCCIO (FROM BALCONY)

BINGUCCIO, *calling up, very importantly:* Your father summons you. From—from whatever you are doing.

CUT TO:

17. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO AND GIRL

MARCO, *to girl:* Good-bye, my dear. My father summons me. Thank the gentlemen for me. (*he jingles the coins in his hand*)

The girl stretches her hand to take some of the coins but quickly he takes her hand, smiles, shakes his head, and leans down to kiss the hand. He climbs down into the gondola, waving idly to the girl as he seats himself in the gondola.

18. MED. CLOSE TWO SHOT—MARCO AND BINGUCCIO IN GONDOLA

In the b.g. can be seen only the gondolier's feet and his *pole which moves in steady rhythm. Water is heard swishing. (No process or background needed)*

MARCO: On what journey am I about to be sent now?

BINGUCCIO, *in an important whisper:* To China.

MARCO, *looks at him, shocked at the news, then smiles thoughtfully:* China.

BINGUCCIO, *enjoying himself:* Yes. It's a dangerous journey. You may never return from it.

MARCO, *laughs:* Really. Don't enjoy that idea so openly.

BINGUCCIO, *patting his chest:* I am not a deceiver. I am not a liar. I can no longer hide the truth: frankly, I am tired of chasing you through the back canals of Venice. (*bows*) I shall be glad not to see you for a few years. Very glad. (*slowly, with relish*) Very, very glad.

Through his words, we

DISSOLVE TO:

19. ROOM IN MARCO POLO'S HOUSE

Maffeo and Binguccio are in the b.g. Nicolo is at the table. Marco is standing in front of him.

NICOLO: The Orientals are a curious people, they do not trade as we do. I want you back with agreements that will enable us to send our ships into the China Seas.

Turns and looks at Binguccio who is grinning.

Get your things ready—you're going with him.

BINGUCCIO: Who, me?

NICOLO: You. (*smiles*) As protector for my son.

BINGUCCIO: But master, my feet have been in bad condition. It is impossible.

Nicolo turns and stares at him and Binguccio nods and backs out of the room.

MARCO, *laughing:* Very glad. Very glad to have you with me.

NICOLO, *to Marco—with great affection:* I have two things for you. (*holds up a letter*) One, a letter to Kublai Khan, the mightiest Emperor on earth. That is where your journey ends,—in his incomparable city of Pekin. The other is more valuable. (*holds out a small, common, worn little bag made of some thin material*) Once, *I* went away. My father gave this to me. He said —and I say to you—fill it with what you see on your way.

MAFFEO: But it will hold nothing but the smallest things.

NICOLO, *looks at Marco:* The smallest things have changed the world. Marco is my son! He understands. (*pointing to a map*) Here is your route. You sail first for the Port of Acre—a fortified city on the coast of Asia—now held by the Crusaders. . . .

The CAMERA MOVES DOWN to the map, following Nicolo's finger from Venice to Acre. Perhaps there might be double exposure here, showing the map and at the same time a Venetian vessel crossing the sea, camel caravans crossing the desert, etc. At any rate, Nicolo's words continue on the Sound Track. Weird music should come through, too.

NICOLO'S VOICE: From Acre, you go overland by caravan—across the Arabian desert into Persia—to Samarkand—over the boundless plains of Tartary where rode the fierce horsemen of Genghis Khan—and so into the great land of Cathay—to the incomparable city of Pekin—where lives Kublai Khan, ruler of the earth and the sun, the moon, and the stars. . . .

The music swells to a crescendo.

(*fading*) Farewell, my son, Marco Polo. God's benison go with you.

CRASHES of Chinese gongs.
DISSOLVE TO:
20. CLOSE SHOT—BESIDE SHIP—EXT. DAY (STOCK SHOT)

Note: The following effect sequence has music throughout, building up in sympathy with the phases of the journey. All movement of ships, caravan, and people will be away from the CAMERA and slightly from Left to Right.

The wet side of the ship is heeling to the swell of the skimming spray.
DISSOLVE TO:
21. SERIES OF MONTAGE SHOTS
Showing sea, foam, caravans in the desert, caravans in mountainous country, sand storms, snow blizzard, etc.
DISSOLVE TO:
22. FULL LONG SHOT—BACKS OF MARCO AND BINGUCCIO
As they trudge slowly forward with packs (clothes) on their backs. Beyond, in the distance, can be seen the City of Pekin. (Paint Shot)
23. MED. SHOT—TURRET OF CITADEL, GATES OF PEKIN—EXT. DAY

Note: This will be the inner and stronger of the two gates built.

An UP SHOT reveals a little old bearded man looking through a series of uncovered glasses. Nearby is a compass. He turns and looks at a small hour glass. He lifts *his hand, signaling to someone beyond. As he lowers his hand the loud crash of a gong is heard. As the note of the gong is reverberating the little old man lifts up his head and in a thin piping voice calls:*

LITTLE OLD MAN: One o'clock!

CUT TO:

24. CLOSE SHOT—SOUTHERN OBSERVER ON TOWER

With the note of the bell still ringing, an enormous guard intones the words—

SOUTHERN OBSERVER: All well to the South!

CUT TO:

25. CLOSE SHOT—NORTHERN OBSERVER

He echoes the words—

NORTHERN OBSERVER: All well to the North!

CUT TO:

26. CLOSE SHOT—EASTERN OBSERVER

He echoes the words—

EASTERN OBSERVER: All well to the East!

CUT TO:

27. CLOSE SHOT—THE LITTLE OLD MAN

His eye is at the telescope. His piping voice echoes the words—

LITTLE OLD MAN: All well to the West!

. . . And the two distant travelers are approaching!

DISSOLVE TO:

28. DOWN SHOT—THE WESTERN GATE OF PEKIN—EXT. DAY

Note: This is the outer gate of the two gates built.

Framed by the massive gate, a colorful procession is proceeding into Pekin, passing beneath us—elephants, "two-hump" camels, Mongol ponies, slave-borne litters.

CUT TO:

29. MED. LONG SHOT—OUTSIDE GATE

Marco and Binguccio, ragged and weary. Binguccio is barely able to walk. He is still tenaciously carrying one shoe and his book.

MARCO, *raising his head—solemnly:* Look, Binguccio! The palace of Kublai Khan! And the end of our journey.

BINGUCCIO, *almost falls against a wall, gasping:* I can go no further. This shall be my grave.

Marco stops a poor pilgrim who is plodding along. Binguccio sinks to the ground.

MARCO: I greet you, my friend—and I'd like to know what's the cause of this great procession?

30. CLOSE MED. SHOT—PILGRIM AND MARCO—STREET

PILGRIM: It is a procession that never ends—the bearing of tribute to our Emperor Kublai Khan. From the warm south come silks, spices, gold and jade; from the cold north come the skins of sables and ermine; from India, precious stones—all the treasure of the world for him who is great enough to command it.

The pilgrim looks toward the palace, then passes on.

CUT TO:

31. TWO SHOT—MARCO AND BINGUCCIO

Marco grins.

MARCO: My father didn't exaggerate; there's a wonderful lot of loot in China! Come on, Binguccio!

BINGUCCIO: It's no use, Master Marco. I can't go another step. My feet are great swollen masses of agony. Leave me to die in misery.

MARCO, *laughs:* No, my father wants you to watch me and see that I don't stray from the paths of duty . . . . Come on . . . .

Marco bends down and picks up Binguccio and carries him piggy back.

DISSOLVE TO:

32. CLOSE SHOT—CHEN TSU'S HOUSE—EXT. DAY

Note: This house is built into *the outer wall of the city.*

Chen Tsu sits before the door of his house. He is a little, meek, wise and aged Chinaman, and he is reading to his two small children, a boy and a girl.

CHEN TSU, *reading:* "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

ELIMINATE BIBLE READING FOR ENGLAND (PROTECT SHOT)

CUT TO:

33. MED. SHOT—CHINESE STREET—EXT. DAY (CLOSE TO THE GATE)

Marco, carrying Binguccio, who seems to have gone to sleep, is coming along the crowded sidewalk. THE CAMERA TRUCKING BEFORE HIM. Marco pauses listening, surprised, to Chen Tsu.

CHEN TSU'S VOICE, *reading obliviously:* "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the merciful——"

Marco goes towards Chen Tsu.

MARCO: "For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God. . . ."

Chen Tsu looks up.

CHEN TSU: You know those words?

MARCO: Yes, I know them. Are you a Christian?

CHEN TSU: No . . . but I want my children to learn the truths of all the philosophers. . . .

Chen Tsu's wife appears in the doorway.

WIFE: It's more important for them to learn to be on time for meals! Your dinner is ready.

With squeaks of delight the two children jump to their feet and scramble into the house. Chen Tsu rises.

CHEN TSU: You'll forgive the abrupt departure.

MARCO, *amused:* It's the same in my country, food comes before philosophy.

CUT TO:

34. CLOSE MED. SHOT—CHEN TSU AND MARCO

Chen Tsu starts into the house and then turns back to Marco who has Binguccio on his back.

CHEN TSU: You're a stranger here. . . .

MARCO: As you can see.

CHEN TSU: Then perhaps . . . my home is humble . . . but perhaps you'll consent to share our inadequate meal. . . .

At the word "meal," Binguccio suddenly jerks into wakefulness.

BINGUCCIO: Did he mention food?

Marco glances over his shoulder at Binguccio, hesitates a moment, then smiles at Chen Tsu.

MARCO: We're delighted to accept your gracious offer.

Chen Tsu bows toward the door as we

DISSOLVE TO:

35. MED. SHOT—CHEN TSU'S LIVING ROOM —INT. DAY

A cooking fire burns, with pots, spit, etc. Chen Tsu is *presenting Marco and Binguccio to his wife, who is placing a steaming bowl of spaghetti on the table, the children on either side of her.*

CHEN TSU: This is my tired wife—and this is my revered mother. . . .

MARCO: My name is Marco Polo; this is Signor Binguccio. We are honored to be here.

CHEN TSU: Then sit down, our welcome guests.

They sit. Chen Tsu bows his head.

God sees all and He will know that while our means are poor our spirit is good.

The children dive for the huge bowl of spaghetti with chop-sticks.

CUT TO:

36. CLOSE SHOT—BINGUCCIO, CHEN TSU AND MARCO POLO

Marco is staring at the chop-sticks bewilderedly. He looks up and forward. Binguccio and Chen Tsu follow his gaze.

CUT TO:

PROTECT ITALIAN PRINT AS ITALY DELETES COMEDY SCENES DEALING WITH SPAGHETTI-EATING

CUT TO:

37. CLOSE MED. SHOT—WHAT THEY SEE

Mother, wife and children have all plunged chop-sticks into the bowl on the table and are winding up huge coils of spaghetti. Mother looks at Binguccio—grins, then dexterously fills her mouth and gobbles energetically.

CUT TO:

38. CLOSE MED. SHOT—MARCO POLO, CHEN TSU AND BINGUCCIO

Chen Tsu sees their expressions and smiles.

> CHEN TSU: You have never seen food like this before?
>
> MARCO: No, what is it—snakes?
>
> CHEN TSU: It has been eaten by the poor folk of China for many generations. We call it *spag-het.* I'll show you how to convey it to your stomach.

Chen Tsu dips his chop-sticks into the bowl before him, speaking as he demonstrates.

> You grasp the chop-sticks thus; clasp these strands thus; rotate them thus, raising your arm heavenward thus—and then. . . .

He gobbles the spaghetti.

> MARCO POLO: And then inhale! I see. Inhale, Binguccio.

Binguccio duplicates the action, the others watching him. He has great difficulty with the chop-sticks.

CUT TO:

39. CLOSE MED. SHOT—THE CHILDREN, WIFE AND MOTHER

The children are screaming with laughter but over all is the wise old smile of the mother.

CUT TO:

40. FULL SHOT AT TABLE

> CHEN TSU: Well, now that you have absorbed some of it, how does it sit within you?

Binguccio swallows, taps his stomach, then suddenly smiles his approbation.

> BINGUCCIO: For snakes, they sit rather well.

DISSOLVE TO:

41. FULL SHOT OF TABLE (LATER)

The children and women have left the table. Marco, well fed, is examining a few remaining strands of spaghetti. Binguccio is still eating. Marco thinks, leans over, takes out the chamois bag and puts in a few strands of the spaghetti.

MARCO, *to Chen Tsu:* Spag-Het. Would you allow me—for my bag of treasures. It has been pitifully empty, but this may be a good beginning. A present for my father in Venice.

CHEN TSU: I envy you men who live in the western world. For you have been given the golden rule of life. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

MARCO: Yes, we've been given it—and we obey it, when convenient. We Venetians get along well with our neighbors in Genoa and Florence until they interfere with our trade. Then we go to war with them.

From outside the windows there are sounds of a commotion. Marco and Binguccio spring to the window.

CUT TO:

42. MED. SHOT—CHINESE STREET IN FRONT OF CHEN TSU'S WINDOW

Two guards are dragging a half-dead prisoner through the street. (*Same prisoner who appears in Scene 122, later*)

CUT TO:

43. MED. SHOT—CHEN TSU'S LIVING ROOM—AT WINDOW

CHEN TSU, *pointing out the window:* It is the same here—as you will learn when you enter the Palace. I advise you to be very careful, Marco Polo.

MARCO: Your Emperor must be a hard man.

CHEN TSU: No. Kublai Khan is a good man—a just man. But he is surrounded by advisers who have little respect for the sanctity of human life. There have been rumors——

He stops, glances nervously over his shoulder as if fearful of being overheard.

MARCO POLO: Of what, Chen Tsu?

CHEN TSU: We have a proverb here: "Too much gossip is the surest form of suicide." So . . . when you meet the Emperor's Minister of State, a Saracen named Ahmed, make every effort to convince him that you are no more than a friendly gentleman who wishes to see the world without treading on anyone's toes.

Chen Tsu's son is stealing forward from the fire carrying a lighted firecracker.

You see . . . Ahmed's toes are peculiarly sensitive.

The boy tosses the firecracker under Binguccio's stool, runs back towards the fire, laughing uproariously. Binguccio looks after him, surprised.

BINGUCCIO: What is the boy running away from?

The cracker explodes. Binguccio emits a scream, as he leaps into the air and falls to his knees, clasping his hands heavenward, then clasping his hind-quarters. Marco is surprised.

Oh . . . Oh, the saints of heaven preserve this good Christian from the powers of Satan that are thundering with great evil roars.

Chen Tsu chastises the children who are almost collapsed with laughter.

CHEN TSU: You undutiful son—is that the way you welcome your father's guests?

Marco picks up the burst firecracker and inspects it with interest.

CHEN TSU: Have you paid no attention to all I have told you of the laws of hospitality?

MARCO, *smiling:* Don't scold them, Chen Tsu. No one has been hurt. But what is this strange invention?

CHEN TSU: It is only a toy.

Binguccio is rising ruefully, rubbing his hind-quarters.

BINGUCCIO: I always said toys were bad for children.

MARCO: But how does it make so much noise?

Chen Tsu moves toward door, nodding wisely. Marco follows.

CHEN TSU: If you will come into my workshop I will show you how it is done.

CUT TO:

44. MED. SHOT—CHEN TSU'S WORKSHOP—INT. DAY

Boxes and sacks, crude chemical instruments. Chen Tsu is ushering in Marco Polo and Binguccio.

CHEN TSU: I am in my humble way a sort of chemist.

He scoops a palmful of gunpowder from a box, pouring it on a rough table.

CHEN TSU: You see this, Marco Polo? It is fire powder—a combination of carbon and saltpetre. Touch fire to it and it flames up in a puff—harmlessly—

He strikes a spark from a tinder box. The powder flames up.

Like that!

He takes a firecracker from the shelf.

But when it is contained in a case and the vapors can't easily escape then it will burst with great violence. Watch!

He strikes another spark, igniting the cracker, tossing it on the table and putting a pot over it. The cracker ex-

plodes, throwing the pot into the air. Binguccio backs away.

You see? (*smiles at Marco*)

MARCO: I see.

BINGUCCIO, *swallows:* You may see, but I felt.

Marco takes a cracker from the shelf.

MARCO: Is this used *only* for toys?

CHEN TSU: Yes—and for illumination on holidays and festivals. Often the Emperor commissions me to make thousands of boxes of this for ceremonial occasions.

MARCO POLO, *contemplatively:* I should think it might be a valuable weapon in war.

CHEN TSU: Oh no! It would be too horrible . . . too deadly. . . .

Marco takes the firecracker, puts it in his bag.

MARCO POLO: Allow me. . . . (*very solemnly*) Again for my Father—although *I* prefer your Spag-Het.

DISSOLVE TO:

45. MED. SHOT—CHEN TSU'S HOUSE—EXT. DAY

Marco and Binguccio are taking their leave of Chen Tsu.

MARCO: You have entertained us royally with white snakes and loud noises, and we thank you. Good-bye, Chen Tsu.

Marco starts out. Binguccio starts to limp beside him. Marco glances at him, smiles, hoists him on his back again.

DISSOLVE TO:

46. LONG SHOT—STREET AND GATE TO CITADEL—EXT. DAY

The never-ending procession is still passing. Marco, carrying Binguccio, jostles his way towards the gate.

DISSOLVE TO:

47. MED. SHOT—BY THE GATE—EXT. DAY

Marco, carrying Binguccio, approaches two heavily armed and gigantic guards.

GUARD: Halt! What is your business in the palace of Kublai Khan?

Marco produces a letter from a pouch in his belt.

MARCO POLO: I have a letter—here it is. . . .

The guards examine the letter from all angles—shake their heads.

GUARD: These are in a writing I cannot read. What is your name?

MARCO: Marco Polo of Venice. . . .

The officer of the guard, in the background, has heard the name.

OFFICER: Polo!

He comes forward, accompanied by his second-in-command and other gigantic guards.

Marco Polo? Oh, yes—we have heard of your remarkable progress.

MARCO POLO, *pleased:* Then I am well known here already?

OFFICER: Our messenger brings us immediate news of any stranger who sets foot on our soil, from the China Sea to the river Danube. Look! There is one of our messengers, up there. . . .

He points up. Marco and Binguccio follow his finger.

CUT TO:

48. LONG SHOT FROM BELOW—EAGLE FLYING RAPIDLY

The eagle zooms down the sky. A cannister is attached to its stomach.

CUT TO:

49. CLOSE MED. SHOT—THE GROUP—(HIGH CAMERA)

Marco is impressed.

MARCO POLO: It is a wonderful country.

OFFICER, *significantly:* Yes—it is a country where *no one* is too unimportant not to be watched constantly. What is that on your back?

MARCO: Oh—that's my bookkeeper. See, he has a book.

OFFICER, *to the second officer:* Escort Marco Polo and his burden to the quarters prepared for them. See that their every wish is gratified.

MARCO: Thanks very much. All I need is a bath—and all my friend needs is a place to lie down.

At once the huge guards fall in around them, crowding them in, literally sweeping them along. Binguccio gulps from amid the brawny shoulders.

CUT TO:

50. MED. SHOT—DECORATIVE PALACE GATES—EXT. DAY

Marco and Binguccio with the guards on either side of them pass through the palace.

CUT TO:

51. GREAT COURT BEFORE PALACE

There are numerous guards about—an impressive scene for Marco and Binguccio as they go across and up the steps.

DISSOLVE TO:

52. CLOSE SHOT—DOWN SHOT OF FLOOR MAP IN THRONE ROOM—INT. DAY

A huge mosaic map of the Tartar Empire built into the Throne Room floor. Model Chinese soldiers, like hun-

dreds of chessmen, occupy strategic points. A species of croupier's rake comes into the Shot, drawing a mass of figures to a point on the coast of the China Sea near to Japan.

AHMED'S VOICE: There, Your Majesty. We have a million soldiers and ten thousand ships. With you leading them, the conquest of Japan will be finished in a few weeks.

THE CAMERA MOVES UP AND BACK to reveal Ahmed, beside the map, with Kublai Khan on his porcelain throne beyond. Kublai is studying the map as Ahmed, the Saracen, rakes more soldiers to the coast. At frequent intervals Kublai helps himself to a sweetmeat from a little stand built into the side of the throne, a hand-maiden restoring the empty place with a fresh one so that the assortment is always complete. Kublai sighs.

KUBLAI: If only war were as easy as that! But—wait, Ahmed—you've removed our army from the West. We need it there for the rebellion in Kaidu's province. We should have to take all our armies from all our frontiers to suppress him.

Ahmed goes toward the throne, the CAMERA TRUCKING into CLOSER SHOT.

AHMED, *wisely:* We need no army to deal with Kaidu. His Tartar barbarians can out-fight our best generals.

CUT TO:

53. MED. SHOT—AHMED SEEN PAST KUBLAI'S FACE

Ahmed approaches the steps, ascending to beside Kublai.

AHMED: No, the greatest weapon we can use with him is—deception! Subtle poison!

Kublai smiles.

KUBLAI: I suppose you're right, Ahmed. Subtle poison.

He takes a sweetmeat.

I know I can count on you for that.

Ahmed smiles and bows. Kublai looks down the room, Ahmed following his gaze.

CUT TO:

54. LONGER SHOT—WHAT THEY SEE—DOWN THRONE ROOM

The Chamberlain is advancing up the room. He bows low as he reaches the steps.

KUBLAI: And who wants to see us today?

CHAMBERLAIN: There are the young women, Your Majesty.

KUBLAI, *pleased:* Oh, yes.

CHAMBERLAIN: And His Excellency, the Persian Ambassador.

KUBLAI, *to Ahmed:* Ambassadors weary me. They always carry complaints. Who else?

CHAMBERLAIN: A stranger, Sire, from the City of Venice in the Empire of Rome. He calls himself Marco Polo.

CUT TO:

55. CLOSE MED. SHOT—KUBLAI—AHMED BESIDE HIM

Ahmed leans towards the Khan.

AHMED: Marco Polo. Our dispatches by eagles warned us of his approach.

KUBLAI: A Roman, eh? I seem to remember that once *they* ruled the earth.

AHMED, *smiling:* Perhaps he has come to demand tribute to Caesar.

KUBLAI: He has come to demand *something*. We can be sure of that.

Kublai addresses the Chamberlain.

I shall see them all—but keep the young women to the last.

The Chamberlain bows and exits.

CUT TO:

56. FULL DOWN SHOT—THE THRONE ROOM—INT. DAY

Majordomo is announcing——

MAJORDOMO: His Excellency—the Persian Ambassador!

The Ambassador, a self-important, fussy little man, advances up the room towards the Khan.

CUT TO:

57. MED. SHOT—BEFORE THE THRONE

The Ambassador advances to the Khan and Ahmed and kowtows at the foot of the steps.

AMBASSADOR: Most Gracious Imperial Majesty.

KUBLAI: Most excellent emissary of the most esteemed sovereign of a most noble nation. What is the complaint today?

AMBASSADOR: His royal majesty, my master, bids me present his compliments and wishes to know when you will dispatch to him the lady of his choice, his affianced bride, his future queen—your beauteous daughter—the Princess Kukachin.

CUT TO:

58. CLOSE SHOT—KUBLAI KHAN

His expression is suddenly wistful.

KUBLAI: My daughter. . . .

He nibbles a sugar-plum contemplatively.

CUT TO:

59. CLOSE SHOT—AHMED

He looks from the Khan to the Ambassador.

CUT TO:

60. FULL SHOT—THE AMBASSADOR FACING THE KHAN

AMBASSADOR: The time has come when she must fulfill the marriage contract negotiated when——

KUBLAI: Yes, I remember all the terms of the marriage contract. I hadn't noticed the passage of years. I hadn't noticed that she had ceased to be a child.

AHMED: She is a woman, Your Majesty. A woman, may I say, of singular allure. She is fit to be a queen . . . and . . . er . . . the mother of kings.

KUBLAI: The mother of kings?

He shakes his head as if to collect himself—then speaks with decision.

Your excellency . . . you may send word to your royal master that the Princess Kukachin will embark for Persia at the seventh moon.

AMBASSADOR: The Great Khan has spoken!

He bows low and withdraws—backwards.

CUT TO:

61. MARCO'S ROOM

Binguccio is on the couch polishing his one Venetian shoe. The Chamberlain comes in, looks around.

CHAMBERLAIN: I trust your master, Marco Polo, has had a pleasant bath.

BINGUCCIO: Oh yes, very pleasant. I have had a pleasant bath also.

CHAMBERLAIN: I have conveyed news of his arrival. His Majesty, Kublai Khan, Lord of the Dragon, Brother of the Sun and Moon, is ready to receive him.

BINGUCCIO: Well . . . ah . . . er . . .

CHAMBERLAIN: Where is your master?

BINGUCCIO: He went out. I . . . ah . . . don't know where. He promised to return immediately. . . .

Chamberlain starts out. Binguccio peeks toward the garden.

But that doesn't always mean *immediately.*

Chamberlain exits out door.

CUT TO:

62. LONG SHOT—THE PALACE GARDEN—EXT. DAY

A beautiful shot of the terraced garden, seen along the length of the tranquil lotus pool. Kukachin enters from LEFT with bow and arrow, followed by Visakha carrying quiver of arrows. Kukachin shoots toward CAMERA RIGHT.

CUT TO:

63. FULL FIGURE SHOT—KUKACHIN AND VISAKHA

Kukachin takes arrow from Visakha and shoots toward tree RIGHT.

CUT TO:

64. CLOSE SHOT—ARROW HITS TREE

CUT TO:

65. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO

He is leaning against a tree, looking off through its blossomed foliage.

CUT TO:

65-A. FULL FIGURE SHOT—KUKACHIN AND VISAKHA FROM MARCO'S ANGLE

She shoots an arrow into the air.

CUT TO:

65-B. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO

Suddenly he ducks behind the tree. An arrow hits the trunk where his face has been. The Princess Kukachin comes into the scene, not seeing Marco who is still behind the tree. She carries a bow. She tugs at the arrow, but it is stuck firmly in the tree. Marco reaches around and, folding his hand over hers, helps her pull out the arrow. Their faces are close together. He looks at the arrow in their clasped hands. She stares at him.

MARCO: You almost ended a brilliant career with that one.

KUKACHIN: Who are you?

MARCO: I thought you knew.

KUKACHIN, *haughtily:* Why should I have known?

MARCO: Because . . . ladies don't usually shoot arrows at gentlemen they don't know.

KUKACHIN, *angrily:* And what of gentlemen who cling too long to unknown ladies' hands?

MARCO: Am I holding your hand?

He looks down, but doesn't let go.

Why, I believe I am. It's quite a pretty little hand, isn't it?

KUKACHIN, *snatching her hand away:* Who are you?

MARCO: Marco Polo, from Venice.

KUKACHIN: Venice? Is that one of our provinces?

MARCO: No, it's a long way off. The journey here took me years. It was a terrible journey, too—full of perils and hardships that would have defeated any but the bravest, strongest man.

KUKACHIN: You think you're rather splendid, don't you?

MARCO: Oh, no—that isn't my thought. It's just what I've been told.

KUKACHIN: Tastes differ in different lands.

MARCO: You're not impressed with me?

KUKACHIN: You don't look like other people.

MARCO, *laughing:* Hasn't anyone ever looked at you . . . as I'm looking now?

KUKACHIN: Why . . . why . . . no . . .

MARCO: You must have led a sheltered life. . . . What is your name? I may want to remember it.

Chamberlain enters.

CHAMBERLAIN: Forgive me for disturbing you, Marco Polo—but your presence is commanded by the Great Khan.

KUKACHIN: What has the Great Khan to do with you?

MARCO: A little matter of business. (*consolingly*) But . . . I'll try to see you again, soon.

KUKACHIN, *bowing, ironically:* I am grateful, Marco Polo.

Marco and Chamberlain exit. CAMERA STAYS ON KUKACHIN.

DISSOLVE TO:

66. LONG SHOT OF BACK OF THRONE

Chamberlain enters from garden with Marco.

CHAMBERLAIN: Marco Polo . . . of Venice!

CUT TO:

67. LONG SHOT—ACROSS THE THRONE ROOM

The Chamberlain is approaching from garden, accompanied by Marco. As they near the throne steps the Chamberlain pauses.

CHAMBERLAIN: Kneel, Marco Polo. Humble yourself before the Majesty of the Emperor Kublai Khan.

CUT TO:

68. CLOSE MED. SHOT—MARCO AND CHAMBERLAIN

Marco kneels.

MARCO: Your Majesty, I humble myself.

CUT TO:

69. FULL SHOT—KUBLAI, AHMED, MARCO

The Khan lifts his hand, scrutinizing Marco.

KUBLAI: That is all the ceremony that is necessary. You may rise.

Marco rises. The Khan continues, indicating Ahmed.

This is Ahmed, my Minister of State.

Marco and Ahmed look at each other. Ahmed's smile is hardly a welcome. Meanwhile, Kublai continues——

Ahmed is a Saracen—a descendant of the great kings of Babylon. He is invaluable to me in his diplomatic skill, his knowledge of the world, his uncanny ability to collect taxes. Whatever it is that you have come to Cathay for, Marco Polo, it is Ahmed's duty to see that you do not get it.

CUT TO:

70. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO

MARCO: I've come for nothing, majesty. It is merely a trip—for educational purposes. Having heard of the wonders of your country, I wanted to see them.

CUT TO:

71. FULL SHOT—BEFORE THE THRONE

The Khan indicates the map.

KUBLAI: My country is spread before you.

Marco looks at the map. Ahmed's voice breaks in suggestively.

AHMED: You will observe that it is very large and very well fortified.

CUT TO:

72. FULL SHOT

Kukachin enters. She and Marco see each other. She then goes on towards the throne, crossing the map, kicking model soldiers aside as she crosses it. Kublai protests.

KUBLAI: Kukachin, you are upsetting my whole plan of campaign.

KUKACHIN: It's no matter. Ahmed will change it all anyway.

She nods coldly to Ahmed as she ascends the throne steps to her father's side.

KUKACHIN: Good day, Ahmed.

AHMED, *bowing:* Daughter of Heaven!

KUBLAI: Marco Polo, this is my daughter, the Princess Kukachin.

CUT TO:

73. MED. SHOT—REVERSE SHOT PAST THRONE

Kukachin, who is on her father's right, is looking at Marco. Marco bows to her.

MARCO: Princess, I am honored.

KUBLAI, *to Kukachin:* Master Polo comes to us from Venice. . . .

KUKACHIN: Yes, I know all about Marco Polo. He has told me everything.

CUT TO:

74. CLOSE SHOT—AHMED

His eyes switch towards Marco—quickly angry and jealous. Over this we hear Kublai's voice.

KUBLAI: Ah, Master Polo, you have already started to see the wonders of our Empire?

CUT TO:

75. FULL SHOT—MARCO FACING THRONE

Marco is explaining.

MARCO: I was in the garden, Majesty, awaiting your command, when suddenly an arrow swept through my left eyebrow. Your daughter followed it . . . and . . . one word led to another.

The Chamberlain enters the foreground of the Shot, bowing low.

CHAMBERLAIN: The young women await Your Majesty's pleasure.

KUBLAI: Let them approach.

The Chamberlain bows and withdraws. The Khan turns to Marco.

KUBLAI: This may entertain you, my friend. Each year my commissioners select the most beautiful maidens of the empire. They are candidates for the privilege of serving as attendants at court. If you will stand here beside me you will be better able to observe them.

Marco moves to beside Ahmed.

CUT TO:

76. LONG SHOT—WHAT HE SEES—DOWN THE THRONE ROOM

A large assemblage of beautiful girls, flower bedecked and in varied costumes, are advancing up the room—guards, armed with scimitars, on either side of them.

CUT TO:

77. MED. SHOT—THE GROUP AT THE THRONE

The Khan is center with Kukachin on his right and Marco and Ahmed on his left. All are looking down the hall. Kukachin glances half shyly at Marco, as if to *see his reaction to the girls. Almost at the same moment Marco looks at her—it is obvious where his interest lies. Kukachin meets his gaze and flushes. But Ahmed has seen the glance between them.*

CUT TO:

78. LONG SHOT—DOWN THE ROOM

The girls advance. The CAMERA CRANES BACK OVER THE THRONE to bring Kukachin, Kublai and Marco into the immediate foreground. The girls stop before the throne steps. The Khan addresses Marco.

KUBLAI: How do our girls compare with the young ladies of Venice, Master Polo?

MARCO: Very favorably, Your Majesty. This expedition becomes more educational every minute.

KUBLAI: They are so ravishing that they tire my eyes. I cannot choose between them.

MARCO: It *is* quite a wide choice.

Suddenly Ahmed smiles unpleasantly. A new thought has struck him.

AHMED: Marco Polo seems to have a keen eye. Perhaps *he* might assist in the selection.

CUT TO:

79. MED. SHOT—MARCO, KUBLAI, KUKACHIN

Marco is taken aback.

MARCO: Me?

The Khan smiles up at him, taking another sugar plum.

KUBLAI: By all means— Have you any suggestions?

80. FULL SHOT—MARCO—THRONE GIRLS IN B.G.

Marco is looking them over carefully. He is somewhat embarrassed, feeling they have placed him on a spot.

MARCO: I'm sorry, Your Majesty. They're all perfect in face and form. But—might I be allowed to test them?

KUBLAI, *misunderstanding: Test* them? (*half rises*)

MARCO: I mean—in a purely psychological way.

KUBLAI: Oh, yes—by all means.

MARCO: I'd like to ask each of them a question. . . .

THE CAMERA PANS ROUND WITH Marco to include the waiting girls. Marco beckons to one of them who comes forward to the foot of the steps, her eyes wide but admiring. Marco bends towards her, whispering in her ear. The girls look at him, surprised.

CUT TO:

81. CLOSE MED. SHOT—MARCO AND GIRL AT FOOT OF STEPS

The girl is looking at Marco—then she lifts her lips to his ear and whispers a reply. Marco smiles seriously and nods—then motions the girl to the right-hand side of the floor.

MARCO: Thank you. Will you go and wait there?

The girl goes, wonderingly, as Marco beckons a second girl forward—bending again—whispering. . . .

CUT TO:

82. CLOSE SHOT—THE KHAN

He is leaning forward, watching with keen interest.

CUT TO:

83. CLOSE MED. SHOT—MARCO AND SECOND GIRL

As the girl finishes whispering her reply, Marco nods and points to the left-hand side of the floor.

MARCO: And *you* go to *that* side.

The girl goes to the left as a third comes forward—Marco repeating the performance.

DISSOLVE:

84. FULL DOWN SHOT—THRONE ROOM FROM ABOVE THE STEPS

Marco stands center, back to the CAMERA. The girls have now been divided into three groups—those on the right and left being equally large, while a smaller group occupies the center. The final girl of all is just retiring to the center group. Marco turns to face the throne.

MARCO: Very well, Majesty. The test is finished.

KUBLAI: What did you say to them?

MARCO: I asked every one the same question: How many teeth has a snapping turtle?

KUBLAI: How many teeth has a snapping turtle? Do you know the answer to that, Kukachin?

KUKACHIN: No. What is it?

MARCO: Neither of you knows—which proves that you have superior wisdom.

He indicates the group on the right.

MARCO: Now the girls in this group all gave a definite number. Some said a hundred teeth—some said twelve. They were all guessing. I should discard them.

KUBLAI: You're right. I don't like guessers.

He addresses the Chamberlain.

Send them home.

CUT TO:

85. SEMI-LONG SHOT—THE RIGHT GROUP

All give Marco dirty looks as they move out.

CUT TO:

86. FULL DOWN SHOT—FROM OVER THE KHAN'S THRONE

Marco indicates the group on the left.

MARCO: The second group contains the girls who gave the correct answer—which is, "a snapping turtle has no teeth at all."

KUBLAI: Then shall I select them?

MARCO: No. I shouldn't. Those girls know too much.

KUBLAI: How right you are. Group two dismissed.

CUT TO:

87. SEMI-LONG SHOT—THE LEFT GROUP

Again the group leaves, giving Marco more dirty looks.

CUT TO:

88. FULL DOWN SHOT—FROM OVER KHAN'S THRONE

Marco indicates the center group beyond.

MARCO: The remaining girls are recommended to Your Majesty's attention. In reply to my question they all said, "I don't know"—proving that they are both honest and reasonable.

His eyes come to Kukachin again. The Khan is delighted.

KUBLAI: Marco, my friend, accept my thanks and congratulations.

To the Chamberlain.

Those girls are chosen!

The girls surge forward delightedly, draping themselves on the steps, gazing up at Marco with admiration. Meanwhile Kublai continues to Marco——

KUBLAI: You will lead a happy life.

MARCO: It has been satisfactory so far.

KUBLAI: You barbarians fascinate me.

MARCO: Barbarians, Your Majesty?

KUBLAI: You uncivilized men of the West. Here in the East we have years of experience behind us—thousands of years. So we take forever to reach every decision. Whereas you, impetuously, jump to the point.

MARCO: In this case, Majesty——

He indicates the bevy of girls on the steps——

The point justified the jump.

KUBLAI, *laughing:* That's just what I mean. And if you see any young lady of my court who captures your fancy . . .

MARCO: Your Majesty is most generous.

Again he looks directly at Kukachin.

CUT TO:

89. CLOSE SHOT—KUKACHIN

She speaks sharply—her eyes on Marco.

KUKACHIN: Ahmed!

Ahmed bows insinuatingly into the Shot.

AHMED: Serene Highness——?

KUKACHIN, *eyes on Marco:* Have you any traitors or spies on hand for punishment?

AHMED, *eyes following hers:* There are always several of them on hand.

KUKACHIN: Then I suggest you take this Venetian and let him see how you dispose of them.

AHMED, *pleased:* I shall do so, Daughter of Heaven.

CUT TO:

90. FULL SHOT—GROUP BY THRONE

The Khan protests——

KUBLAI: Is this the way to treat a guest? We don't want him to see the uglier side of our national life.

MARCO: Oh, that's all right, Majesty. I want to see everything—especially when it's recommended by the Daughter of Heaven.

AHMED: Then if you will follow me, Marco Polo——

Ahmed bows, smiling horribly, then leads the way down the steps. Marco bows to Kublai and Kukachin, his eyes holding hers a moment. He then follows Ahmed across *the hall, CAMERA PANNING WITH THEM. As Marco passes the gratefully smiling girls on the steps, he waves at them——*

MARCO: Don't mention it, girls.

CUT TO:

91. MED. SHOT—OUTSIDE THRONE ROOM

As Ahmed and Marco come out of door. On a bench, in corridor, Binguccio is sitting. He looks up, smiles happily.

BINGUCCIO, *to Marco:* Is everything—fine?

MARCO, *looks at Ahmed, then turns back to Binguccio:* Oh yes—yes, fine. (*then turns to Ahmed*) This is my——

AHMED: I know—your bookkeeper. (*to Binguccio*) Would you like to join us? I am about to show your master the pleasures of our palace.

BINGUCCIO, *face lights up:* Thank you.

He tags along with Marco, very happily.

CUT TO:

92. MED. SHOT—CORRIDOR SIDE SHOT—INT. DAY

Ahmed is leading the way along a palace corridor—the CAMERA MOVING ALONG BESIDE THEM. Ahmed reaches a door, CAMERA PANNING INTO CLOSE MED. SHOT of the two beside it. Ahmed opens the door. Marco is about to step through when Ahmed gently stops him and points down.

CUT TO:

93. DOWN LONG SHOT—WHAT THEY SEE—EXT. DAY

A gaping chasm some fifty feet deep, falling away directly from the door.

CUT TO:

94. CLOSE SHOT—THE THREE ON THRESHOLD

Marco and Binguccio glance at each other, realizing how close they have been to stepping into the void. Ahmed takes a mallet from a niche in the wall and strikes a gong. All three look across the chasm.

CUT TO:

95. LONG SHOT—DRAWBRIDGE IN ACTION—EXT. DAY

What has looked like the high doorway of the building across the chasm is swinging down towards us, proving to be a covered drawbridge—looking rather like the Bridge of Sighs—which finally bridges the sheer drop below. Ahmed speaks as he leads the way across the bridge.

AHMED: You see—I have a little tower of my own—a sort of fortress within a fortress.

CUT TO:

96. MED. SHOT—PLATFORM ON OTHER SIDE OF BRIDGE

Ahmed leads the two off the bridge, which is wound up behind him by a burly guard, a crank handle and chain mechanism. A second guard throws open a grim looking door, Ahmed leading the way through. Binguccio doesn't like the look of the guards at all.

CUT TO:

97. CLOSE MED. SHOT—AHMED'S APARTMENT—INT. DAY

The three enter the room. The doors swing shut. Marco and Binguccio look forward.

CUT TO:

98. LONG SHOT—WHAT THEY SEE

The grim, vaulted apartment, torchlit, ominous.

CUT TO:

99. CLOSE MED. SHOT—MARCO, BINGUCCIO AND AHMED

Marco's and Binguccio's eyes meet uneasily. Ahmed smiles at their discomfiture and leads them on, the CAMERA PANNING WITH THEM, past an instrument hideously like a rack, to beside a tapestry curtain.

MARCO: It's very cozy.

AHMED: Not a conspicuously cheerful place—but useful—for certain purposes.

He suddenly throws aside the tapestry curtain, revealing immediately behind it a perch of several vultures, chained to cross bars and obviously ravenously hungry. One of them snaps venomously towards Binguccio, who gasps in fear and horror.

BINGUCCIO: Oooooo!

Ahmed smiles. Binguccio swallows violently, then tries to show appreciation of the vultures.

D-dear little fellows. Er . . . your f-favorite birds, I conclude?

AHMED: They amuse me.

BINGUCCIO: I see your point. P-personally I prefer canaries.

AHMED, *to Marco:* I am a great lover of animals and have many interesting pets. I find these vultures really quite helpful—especially when I have guests who are backward in the art of conversation.

He indicates the vultures.

I merely place the guest in here, and——

MARCO: And—he is more ready to converse. I see.

AHMED, *smiling:* You are very observant, Marco Polo. That is an admirable quality. It will save you from the danger of *casting your eyes in the wrong direction.*

Marco looks at him directly.

MARCO: And just what does that refer to?

AHMED: I leave all to your intelligence.

He passes on from the vultures, the CAMERA PANNING WITH HIM, to a gong which he strikes.

CUT TO:

100. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO AND BINGUCCIO

Both are wondering what is going to happen next. Their eyes jerk past the CAMERA.

CUT TO:

101. LONG SHOT—WHAT THEY SEE

A grilled door swings open—Toctai and Bayan entering with two guards who drag between them a poor, beaten, broken prisoner. Toctai and Bayan are a villainous-looking couple, Toctai having a vivid scar across his face.

CUT TO:

102. MED. CLOSE SHOT—TOCTAI, BAYAN AND AHMED

AHMED: These are Toctai and Bayan, my faithful assistants. Toctai's face is unfortunately disfigured—due to an argument he once had with one of the vultures. But he's our most skilful executioner.

He indicates the prisoner.

And this miserable object was one of the officers of the army of Kaidu, the rebel. He made the mistake of entering the palace as a spy. He was caught.

MARCO, *quietly:* That was a worse mistake.

AHMED: Exactly.

He speaks to the prisoner.

> You have your last chance to speak. Where is your master, Kaidu?

The miserable object shakes his head helplessly. Toctai, grinning hideously, goes to Ahmed and whispers into Ahmed's ear and Ahmed smiles and nods as Toctai finishes whispering. He turns to Marco.

> AHMED: What a shame! He must have lost his tongue. Very well, Toctai—you may mercifully end his misery.

Toctai goes towards the wall. The guards step briskly aside. The prisoner is alone.

CUT TO:

103. CLOSE SHOT—TOCTAI

He pulls a lever in the wall.

CUT TO:

104. MED. SHOT—THE PRISONER PROMINENT

Suddenly the floor beneath the prisoner's feet gives way —a trap. With his hands upthrown, the prisoner disappears. Marco and Binguccio are horrified. Ahmed slips his hand into the crook of Marco's elbow again, leading him to the edge of the trap, THE CAMERA PANNING WITH THEM. Marco looks down.

CUT TO:

105. LONG DOWN SHOT—WHAT HE SEES—THE DEN

A long funnel leads into menacing darkness—but in the gloom we can see the swift movement of wild animals. A tiger leaps up towards the CAMERA, its face seen comparatively clearly. Snarling and growling accompany the kill.

CUT TO:

106. MED. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO AND AHMED

Marco is obviously horrified. Ahmed is looking at him. Marco realizes it is a test and controls his feelings by an effort. Ahmed nods out of the Shot. The trap closes with a snap, shutting off the sound of the tigers. Ahmed smiles insinuatingly at Marco.

AHMED: You came here to be educated, Marco Polo —and this is the first lesson.

Marco looks at Ahmed levelly.

MARCO: Thank you. I'll remember it.

Ahmed smiles and turns out of the Shot. Immediately Marco wipes his brow, his expression revealing his real feelings.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

107. SEMI-LONG SHOT—MARCO'S ROOM—INT. NIGHT

Shooting toward the window. Binguccio on the bed. Marco sitting on bed steps. A chain of firecrackers on second step, exploding in rapid succession. Marco and Binguccio sit watching the crackers. It is a superb moonlight night. Marco is beaming delightedly, but Binguccio has his fingers pressed into his ears. The exploding chain finishes. Binguccio uncovers his ears. Suddenly a lone cracker in the middle of the now dead chain explodes. Binguccio jumps, covers his ears again—then realizes it is too late and uncovers them once more. Marco speaks raptly.

MARCO: Wonderful, isn't it?

BINGUCCIO: Wonderful! I suppose you know we've been in this place seven days . . . and all you've done is to make eyes at the Princess and set off firecrackers.

MARCO: I've been educating myself.

BINGUCCIO: That's one way of putting it.

Marco picks up a large live firecracker and looks at it. He lights the firecracker with a punk, tossing it up. Binguccio covers his ears. The cracker explodes. Binguccio uncovers them.

MARCO: With enough of these one man could shake the earth!

BINGUCCIO: I don't doubt it. But . . . don't you think we might shake . . . ourselves home?

Marco lights another cracker with a punk, tossing it up. Binguccio covers his ears. The cracker explodes. Binguccio uncovers them.

MARCO: You must learn the Chinese philosophy about time. What is a day? One 365th of a year. What is a year? Only a hundredth part of a century. (*rises*) We have all the time in the world.

Marco crosses up to window.

CUT TO:

108. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO

Marco looking off.

CUT TO:

109. MED. LONG SHOT SHOOTING ACROSS POOL WITH KUKACHIN IN THE BACKGROUND

She exits. CAMERA LEFT.

CUT BACK TO:

110. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO

BINGUCCIO: Well, I must say . . . it's beautiful here.

MARCO, *seeing Kukachin:* Yes . . . beautiful.

Marco goes out.

BINGUCCIO: Marco! Where are you going now?

CUT TO:

111. MED. SHOT—IN THE GARDEN

Kukachin sits on the edge of the pool, feeding the large carp from a bag in her hand.

CUT TO:

112. CLOSE SHOT INTO POOL OVER KUKACHIN'S SHOULDER

Her reflection in pool, Marco's reflection enters, Kukachin rises.

CUT TO:

113. CLOSE MED. SHOT—MARCO AND KUKACHIN

Kukachin rises into Shot.

KUKACHIN: Strangers are not supposed to come into these gardens uninvited.

MARCO: But you need someone to protect you from the powers of darkness.

Kukachin starts to walk. Marco goes with her, CAMERA TRUCKS WITH THEM.

KUKACHIN, *haughtily:* I am a princess. Even the powers of darkness are afraid of me.

MARCO: Are there no men in this Empire who forget you are a princess—who want to take you in their arms and make love to you?

KUKACHIN: If there are such men, they die quickly.

They continue along the path beside the pool. Marco looks at her, then reaches out and touches her hand.

MARCO: Do you mind if I ask you a personal question?

KUKACHIN: It is the one about the snapping turtle?

MARCO: No—this is not a trick. I'd like to know. Do princesses in this country ever marry ordinary people?

KUKACHIN: Sometimes.

MARCO: Good! And what about you, Princess Kukachin, will you love and marry the man you choose for yourself?

KUKACHIN: I shall marry a king.

MARCO: A real king—or just someone who acts like one?

CUT TO:

114. MED. CLOSE SHOT—KUKACHIN AND MARCO

For a moment she doesn't reply, then she speaks as she walks forward again, Marco beside her. THE CAMERA TRUCKING BACK THROUGH THE GARDEN before them, as they approach the Summer House Shrine.

KUKACHIN: When I was in my cradle I became engaged to be married to the King of Persia.

MARCO: Have you ever seen him?

KUKACHIN: No, but he's a great man.

MARCO: Do you think you'll be happy with him?

KUKACHIN: Why not? I shall be Queen of Persia.

MARCO: And when is the happy event to take place?

CUT TO:

115. CLOSE MED. SHOT—BY THE SHRINE

Kukachin stops; they are just by the open shrine. She looks up at the great full moon which is low in the heavens, seen above the trees.

KUKACHIN: I shall start on my journey westward at the seventh moon.

MARCO: If I were the King of Persia, I should be very impatient.

CUT TO:

116. MED. SHOT—THE SHRINE—NIGHT

Kukachin enters the open shrine. A lantern hangs before a white stone goddess. Marco follows Kukachin, who stands before the goddess. The weird music is heard.

KUKACHIN: This is the Shrine of the Moon Goddess—to whom all maidens pray that they may find a lover who is faithful . . . and gallant and strong.

She looks up at Marco. He gazes down into her eyes.

MARCO: And you're going to marry the King of Persia. Will you love him?

KUKACHIN: He will put love in my heart . . . and it will grow like the singing tree . . . and it will belong to him . . . forever.

MARCO: It will be very beautiful . . . and . . . and perhaps I should say good-bye, now.

KUKACHIN: Good-bye?

MARCO: I think I'd *better* go.

KUKACHIN, *wistfully:* You are tired of us here in Cathay.

MARCO: Not that, Princess Kukachin. I just feel . . . well . . . there are warnings of danger sounding in my heart. I've heard such warnings before—though never so strongly. You see . . . you may be a princess . . . but when I look into your eyes, I see deep beauty (*his hands close on her white arms*); when I touch you, I feel warm life. And I've never been one to regard such things calmly.

He releases her arms.

But . . . but before I go . . . I wonder if you would grant me one small favor.

KUKACHIN: You want some token—my scarf or kerchief—to take with you for remembrance?

MARCO: No. Scarves and kerchiefs become old and threadbare too quickly. I'd like to be allowed to kiss you good-bye.

CUT TO:

117. CLOSE SHOT—KUKACHIN AND MARCO

She is puzzled.

KUKACHIN: Kiss me? What is that?

MARCO: A custom we have in the Western world.

KUKACHIN: I don't know how it is done.

MARCO: I'll show you. First, I place one hand here . . . and the other hand there . . .

KUKACHIN: But—isn't that rather familiar?

MARCO: Yes. That's the whole point!

KUKACHIN: But what do *I* do?

MARCO: You'll decide that for yourself—later. I now draw you close to me——

He draws her closer still——

I lower my face to yours until our lips are touching——

He suits the action to the words——

KUKACHIN, *mumbling:* But why should our lips ——?

Marco lifts his head for one moment.

MARCO: Please . . . *please* . . . you mustn't talk. . . .

He kisses her again—a long kiss. Her eyes close. He lifts his head. Her lips part with a little sigh. She opens her eyes, asking softly——

KUKACHIN: Do all men observe that custom in the Western world?

MARCO: Yes . . . *every* man . . . to the best of his ability.

He kisses her again.

KUKACHIN: Could *I* do it?

MARCO: Oh, yes, it's very easy. You just pull in your lips—as though you were tasting something—like this ——

He pulls in his lips.

Try it. . . .

Kukachin lifts her mouth to his and kisses him.

MARCO: That's *very* good!

She puts her arms around him.

KUKACHIN: And is this right—with my arms?

MARCO: Yes . . . I . . . I think . . . you've . . . learned.

She kisses him again passionately. Marco is holding her very close. She looks up at the Moon Goddess, then at Marco. He kisses her again.

CUT TO:

118. CLOSE SHOT—BAYAN

He is peering evilly through the lattice work of the pagoda. He ducks and disappears.

CUT TO:

119. CLOSE SHOT—AHMED'S APARTMENT—INT. NIGHT

Ahmed sits by a table, speaking to Toctai.

AHMED: The rebellion in Kaidu's province is getting dangerous. We must put a stop to it—before the Emperor learns the truth about the taxes we've—— (*smiles*) we've borrowed from those barbarians. And this time I don't want failure. Disguise yourselves as Tartar tribesmen and join Kaidu's army.

TOCTAI, *eagerly:* And kill him?

AHMED, *smiling:* First you will spread discontent in his army. Make them believe that *he* is the one who is stealing their tax money. Then—when you have the chance—perform your specialty.

CUT TO:

120. CLOSE SHOT—TOCTAI

He grins gleefully, his hands making a movement representative of execution—his open right hand striking down in front of his clenched left fist, the fist withdrawing into the sleeve of his cloak as the hand passes—an effect of instantaneous decapitation.

CUT TO:

121. CLOSE MED. SHOT

Ahmed nods his approval.

AHMED: With Kaidu dead, his army will split into warring factions—and the rebellion will be broken.

TOCTAI, *greedily:* And what of Kublai Khan? When can I perform my specialty on him?

AHMED, *smiling meaningly: I'll* attend to *him,* Toctai. You start for the West at once.

The sound of the wall door rolling back is heard. Both glance toward the door, the CAMERA PANNING TO INCLUDE BAYAN, who enters through the grilled gateway, coming directly to the table. Ahmed asks——

AHMED: What's *your* news, Bayan?

BAYAN: They have met again, Lord Ahmed. In the garden. She told him she's going to marry the King of Persia.

AHMED: And what did he do?

BAYAN: They went into the shrine of the Moon Goddess and he took hold of her and then they put their mouths together and did something like this.

He pulls his lips in with a smacking sound.

CUT TO:

122. MED. SHOT—AHMED, TOCTAI AND BAYAN

Ahmed is puzzled.

AHMED: Like *what?*

Bayan desperately tries to think up a way of explaining. He looks at Toctai.

BAYAN: Well . . . er . . . like this, Excellency——

He suddenly seizes Toctai by the shoulders, the CAMERA PANNING INTO CLOSE SHOT of the two of them. Before Toctai can realize what is happening, Bayan kisses him. Toctai gasps and jerks his head. Bayan's kiss lands on his nose.

TOCTAI: Ugh!!

CUT TO:

123. CLOSE SHOT—AHMED

He has sprung to his feet, his eyes ablaze with anger.

AHMED: Ah!

CUT TO:

124. CLOSE SHOT—BAYAN AND TOCTAI

Bayan releases the disgusted Toctai and says helplessly——

BAYAN: Well, that's what he did. *I* don't know what it was.

CUT TO:

125. CLOSE SHOT—AHMED

He speaks meaningly.

AHMED: *I* know.

He comes forward to Bayan, the CAMERA MOVING WITH HIM. He speaks with grim meaning.

Stay here. I may have some work for you—*quite soon.*

He goes out quickly.

DISSOLVE TO:

126. CLOSE SHOT—KHAN IN BED—VERY CLOSE SHOT (NO NEED FOR BIG SET)

The Shot on the Khan includes Ahmed.

AHMED: Of course, Sire, it is nothing serious. But he is a foreigner and therefore fascinating to one as young and innocent as Her Highness.

KUBLAI, *amused:* He's a clever rascal.

AHMED: Exactly. And since Your Majesty is to be far from Pekin on the expedition to Japan, I suggest it would be as well if Marco Polo were elsewhere.

KUBLAI: I might take him with me. He'd keep me amused.

AHMED: I think we can find employment for him in the West. Our spies in Kaidu's camp are making poor progress. Why not send him there? He would be above suspicion, he would probably gain Kaidu's friendship at once; and then he could work with our secret agents and perhaps——

KUBLAI: A capital suggestion, Ahmed!

He claps his hands. The Chamberlain appears. Khan gets up.

Fetch me the Venetian, Marco Polo.

DISSOLVE TO:

127. FULL SHOT—THRONE ROOM—INT. NIGHT

Marco is entering throne room. He seems a little doubtful as to the reason for this summons.

KUBLAI, *cordially:* Ah, Marco Polo, I trust your health is good.

MARCO: Excellent, Your Majesty.

KUBLAI: Your quarters are comfortable?

MARCO: The best, Sire.

KUBLAI: And you have been seeing all the sights of our great city?

MARCO: I regret that I could not live long enough to see them all, Your Majesty.

AHMED: I understand, Master Marco, you've spent many hours with our merchants.

MARCO: Oh, yes. But just in the spirit of adventure.

KUBLAI: Yes, you have an adventurous spirit, my friend, and I think I can provide more exercise for it. (*he points to the map*) Do you see these little islands beyond the China Sea?

MARCO: Yes, Your Majesty.

128. SEMI-LONG SHOT—THE MOSAIC MAP—FROM MARCO'S EYELINE

We are focusing on the islands of Japan.

KUBLAI'S VOICE: The people who live on those islands are called Japanese.

CUT TO:

129. CLOSE SHOT—THE THRONE AND THE STEPS

The Khan points towards the map.

KUBLAI: They are interfering with our silk trade. I shall lead a mighty army against them and crush them. They must be taught that no one can question the power of Eternal China.

AHMED: For this campaign against Japan, His Majesty has withdrawn his army from the West where it was facing the rebel leader, Kaidu.

KUBLAI: Who has been causing a great disturbance. I want you to go to Kaidu's camp, enter it as an ordinary traveler, coöperate with our secret agents, help them to spy upon this rebel and kill him.

MARCO: I have had no experience in murder, Sire.

AHMED: That is not necessary. We only wish to make use of your remarkable gifts for intrigue.

MARCO, *nervously:* I am sorry, Your Majesty. I am only a traveler . . . a visitor. I——

AHMED, *smiles—speaks, a little wearily:* When you were twenty miles outside of Venice, Marco Polo, we knew your errand.

KUBLAI: And to put it in your blunt, Western fashion, if you will do us this favor—it is possible that, upon your return, you will be that much nearer your coveted trade agreements.

MARCO, *looks at him, then reluctantly:* When would I start?

AHMED: At once! You will be escorted by some of our most reliable men.

Marco's eyes are on Ahmed. The Khan rises between the two of them.

KUBLAI: I hope you have a pleasant journey, Marco Polo, and gather much interesting information and come back to us before many moons have waxed and waned. Farewell, my friend.

MARCO, *bowing:* Your Majesty.

He looks at Ahmed questioningly.

AHMED: There is no cause for alarm, I assure you. We shall take every precaution to guarantee your safety.

DISSOLVE TO:

130. CLOSE MED. SHOT—INSIDE DOOR OF MARCO'S ROOM—INT. NIGHT

(*The room is unlit, except by vividly flooding moonlight*) *Marco, looking very serious, enters the room, going straight to Binguccio's bed. Binguccio is sound asleep, the bedclothes pulled up tightly over his head. Marco shakes Binguccio violently.*

MARCO: Out of bed, Binguccio! Pack up! We're going!

Binguccio, half asleep, blinks like an owl.

BINGUCCIO: Going? Where?

MARCO: To the west.

Binguccio sits bolt upright, wide awake at once.

BINGUCCIO: Home?

MARCO, *grimly:* No—into trouble!

He hurries towards the window and goes out, Binguccio blinking after him.

CUT TO:

131. SEMI-LONG SHOT—BESIDE THE POOL

Marco comes to the tree of his first meeting with the Princess. He pauses beside it, glancing round half desperately. Suddenly an arrow is quivering in the tree again, close to Marco's head. His eyes light up. He seizes the arrow, starting as he sees——

CUT TO:

132. CLOSE SHOT—THE ARROW IN HIS HAND

A fine silken cord is attached to the arrow, running out of the Shot.

CUT TO:

133. CLOSE MED. SHOT—MARCO

He is looking at the silken cord. He glances in the direction in which it leads, then starts to follow it across the grass, the CAMERA PANNING WITH HIM, across the edge of the pool towards the Princess' apartment.

CUT TO:

134. FULL SHOT—MOONLIT GARDEN—FROM KUKACHIN'S TERRACE

Marco, following the cord, approaches the terrace. In the foreground he stops, looking forward.

CUT TO:

135. SEMI-LONG SHOT—WHAT HE SEES—TERRACE WINDOW

Kukachin, in her white night-dress and kimono is at the open balustrade-like terrace window of her apartment.

Her bow is still in her hand, the silk cord running to it. Her voice is perturbed as she whispers softly——

KUKACHIN: Marco!

CUT TO:

136. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO

For a moment he is staring—then he leaps forward to the balustrade, the CAMERA PANNING INTO CLOSE MED. SHOT.

MARCO: Princess Kukachin!

There is deep anxiety in Kukachin's voice——

KUKACHIN: Marco—why are they sending you to the West, to Kaidu's province?

MARCO: Well . . . you see . . .

KUKACHIN, *desperately:* You must not go.

She clutches him.

MARCO: Why not? Are you in danger?

KUKACHIN: No! But—Ahmed is trying to get rid of you. He'll never let you come back alive.

MARCO, *puzzled:* Why am *I* so important to Ahmed?

KUKACHIN: He's afraid of you . . . because you're strong here . . .

She touches his arm.

And here . . .

She touches his forehead.

And here . . .

She touches his heart. Marco takes her in his arms.

MARCO: He's afraid of me because I love you.

He kisses her. She yields, passionately. After a while she speaks, in a tremulous voice.

KUKACHIN, *clinging to him:* You don't know Ahmed. No one will ever know what became of you.

MARCO: He could do it as easily here as anywhere else. . . . But . . . if I go on this expedition . . . and be of some value to the Emperor . . . then . . .

KUKACHIN: Then what, Marco?

MARCO: Then perhaps the Moon Goddess might tell you that you don't have to travel all the way to Persia to find your husband.

KUKACHIN, *passionately:* She doesn't have to tell me. . . . I know. . . .

He kisses her again. Suddenly Ahmed's voice speaks out of the Shot.

AHMED, *voice only:* My humblest apologies, Daughter of Heaven, for this intrusion . . .

Both start, looking in the direction of the voice.

CUT TO:

137. MED. SHOT—WHAT THEY SEE—
AHMED

He stands on the terrace, smiling. He comes forward, the CAMERA PANNING AND PULLING BACK to include Marco and Kukachin.

AHMED: . . . but I have come to tell Marco Polo horses are ready and it is advisable for him to start out with all possible speed.

MARCO: Your Highness, we may never meet again, so I beg leave to say farewell in the fashion of my native land.

Marco presses his lips to her hand with great Venetian gallantry.

MARCO, *whispers:* Send word . . . if you need me.

KUKACHIN: Good-bye, Marco Polo.

Marco looks into her eyes for a moment, then turns and goes quickly.

AHMED: Isn't it a pity that all Western men think only of business?

He smiles, bows and goes.

DISSOLVE TO:

138. LONG SHOT—MOVING TROOP OF HORSES—OUTSIDE PEKIN DAWN (Location)

DISSOLVE TO:

139. MED. CLOSE SHOT—HEAD OF COLUMN

Marco and Binguccio follow the guide. More riders pass CAMERA with Bayan and Lieutenant in rear.

CUT TO:

140. CLOSE MED. SHOT—BAYAN AND LIEUTENANT (PROCESS SHOT)

The Lieutenant glances towards Marco.

LIEUTENANT: Now?

BAYAN, *shaking his head No:* When we reach the pass at Nung Po.

The Lieutenant grins his approval of this scheme.

DISSOLVE TO:

141. DOWN LONG SHOT—MOUNTAIN DEFILE AND PRECIPICE—EXT. SUNSET (Location)

We are Shooting Down on a point where the trail passes from a narrow defile onto the edge of a sheer precipice. The troop of horse ride out of the defile and along the edge of the precipice.

CUT TO:

142. LONG SHOT—ALONG TRACK ABOVE PRECIPICE (Location)

The horsemen come along the track towards us. Bayan reins in his horse and lifts his hand.

BAYAN: Halt!

The troop of horse halts. Bayan and the Lieutenant ex-

change glances. Then the Lieutenant rides off down to the rear of the line.

CUT TO:

143. MED. SHOT—MARCO AND BINGUCCIO

They have reined in their horses. Binguccio heaves a sigh of relief.

BINGUCCIO: Praise the Saints! We're going to rest and eat.

But Marco isn't so sure of it. He glances towards the front of the troop.

MARCO: I don't like it!

CUT TO:

144. LONG SHOT—WHAT HE SEES

Bayan and the troopers are all looking back as if towards Marco. Bayan draws his sword. The troopers start to rein their horses round as if to face Marco.

CUT TO:

145. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO

With growing alarm in his face, he glances the other way.

CUT TO:

146. LONG SHOT—WHAT HE SEES

The Lieutenant has ridden now to the rear of the troop. He, too, draws his sword. All the troopers are looking as if at Marco.

CUT TO:

147. MED. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO AND BINGUCCIO

Marco looks down.

CUT TO:

148. LONG DOWN SHOT—WHAT HE SEES—DOWN THE PRECIPICE

From Marco's eyeline we see the precipice dropping away below into a deep gorge.

CUT TO:

149. MED. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO AND BINGUCCIO

Binguccio is alarmed by Marco's behavior.

> BINGUCCIO: What's wrong, Marco?

Marco glances left and right again, then speaks in a low tone——

> MARCO: I am going to try to get us out of this. If I can . . . ride westward.

CUT TO:

150. SEMI-LONG SHOT—BAYAN AND TROOPERS

Suddenly Bayan gives a shout and spurs his horse as if towards Marco, the troopers closing in with him, their spears pointing forward.

CUT TO:

151. MED. SHOT—MARCO AND BINGUCCIO

Marco swings his horse towards Bayan, spurring it forward as if to make a dash for the end of the pass.

CUT TO:

152. SEMI-LONG SHOT—LIEUTENANT AND TROOPERS

The Lieutenant and his troopers start in pursuit of Marco, galloping past Binguccio, whose horse rears violently, throwing Binguccio off. He runs toward the West.

CUT TO:

153. SEMI-LONG SHOT—ON THE BRINK

The converging troopers are close around Marco now; his horse is on the very edge of the precipice; it rears up. Spears flash towards Marco's body.

CUT TO:

154. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO AND HORSE'S HEAD

Marco's expression is desperate as the horse's head rears high, then seems to go right over backwards, falling out of the Shot. We hear the triumphant shout of the troopers.

CUT TO:

155. CLOSE SHOT—BAYAN

He spurs his horse forward, looking down.

CUT TO:

156. LONG DOWN SHOT—WHAT BAYAN SEES—DOWN THE PRECIPICE

We see Marco's horse plunging to destruction.

CUT TO:

157. MED. SHOT—BAYAN

He is sitting on his horse, looking down the precipice, smiling. The Lieutenant rides up.

LIEUTENANT: What about the other one?

BAYAN: What's the difference? How long do you think he will last in this country?

Bayan reins his horse around and shouts to his troop——

Follow me!

The CAMERA PANS as Bayan spurs his horse into a gallop, leading his troop back towards the defile.

DISSOLVE TO:

158. MED. SHOT—ON THE FACE OF THE PRECIPICE—EXT. SUNSET

What looks like a mound of loose earth seems to be caught over a twisted tree on a steeply sloping section of the cliff. The earth moves, falling away, then we see *that it is Marco covered with the dust of the avalanche, perilously placed but alive. He shakes away more earth, then clambers up a little so that one foot is firmly braced against the tree trunk. He looks down.*

CUT TO:

159. LONG DOWN SHOT—WHAT HE SEES

The precipice stretching away down to the gathering gloom.

CUT TO:

160. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO

He shudders slightly and looks up.

CUT TO:

161. LONG UP-SHOT—WHAT HE SEES

The cliff rises steeply above him.

CUT TO:

162. CLOSE MED. SHOT—MARCO

He smiles grimly. He remembers what Kukachin said and taps his arm, his forehead, and his heart. Then slowly, laboriously, he starts inching his way up the cliff like a human fly, the CAMERA PANNING UP WITH HIM. Once his foot slips but he manages to catch it on the tree. He resumes his attempt. Sweat is pouring from his face.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

163. MED. SHOT—CITADEL TOWER—EXT. DAY

Ahmed and Saracen Officer enter and look down.

CUT TO:

164. LONG SHOT (Painting) SHOWING THE CITY WALL

In the mediate foreground Kublai's howdah on the *road beyond the gate and the army he is taking to Japan stretching out on the plain in the distance.*

CUT TO:

165. CLOSE SHOT OF AHMED AND SARACEN OFFICER

Looking off.

OFFICER: When that mighty army finishes with the Japanese, there won't be one of them left living.

AHMED: You're quite right—provided the army *reaches* Japan.

The Officer looks at him, questioningly.

The China Sea is a powerful adversary. One typhoon might end the glorious reign of Kublai Khan.

The Officer indulges in a slow smile.

CUT TO:

(166. OUT)

167. CLOSE SHOT—KUKACHIN ON HER SMALL BALCONY

Kukachin is waving farewell to her father.

CUT TO:

168. KUKACHIN ON BALCONY

There are tears in Kukachin's eyes as her hand slowly ceases to wave. Suddenly, almost as if drawn, she glances up.

CUT TO:

169. SEMI-LONG SHOT—WHAT SHE SEES

Ahmed is looking down at her across the battlements of the Citadel Tower—fixedly, intently, cruelly.

CUT TO:

170. CLOSE SHOT—KUKACHIN

There is a sudden curious fear in her eyes. For a moment she is staring back as if at Ahmed, then she turns and hurries out of Shot past the CAMERA.

CUT TO:

171. CLOSE SHOT—AHMED

He smiles triumphantly.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

172. CLOSE MED. SHOT—MARCO IN DESOLATE COUNTRY—EXT. DAY (Location)

Marco, very ragged and bedraggled, is trudging along. He stops as he sees something.

CUT TO:

173. FULL SHOT—WHAT HE SEES

An elderly Farmer is plowing a rough field. His horse is huge and incredibly aged.

CUT TO:

174. MED. SHOT—MARCO COMING TO FARMER

Marco comes forward to the Farmer.

MARCO: I greet you, my friend.

The Farmer looks at him with expressionless indifference.

FARMER: What do you want of me? If you're begging, I'll tell you now I have nothing to give.

MARCO: I wish to buy that fine horse of yours.

The Farmer glances at the horse, then at Marco, not sure of his sanity.

FARMER: You will pay money?

MARCO: I will give you this piece of gold.

The Farmer looks at the coin, then at the horse, then at Marco. He nods——

FARMER: You have bought him.

The Farmer takes the coin, unhitches the harness. Marco *swings himself up on to the horse's saddleless back, taking the rough reins.*

CUT TO:

175. CLOSE MED. SHOT—MARCO AND FARMER

Marco is looking down at the Farmer as he enquires——

MARCO: How far is it to Kaidu's province?

FARMER: Ten leagues . . . a hundred leagues . . . a thousand . . . it makes no difference. You'll never get there on *that* horse.

Marco laughs and pats the horse's neck.

MARCO: Thank you, my friend, for the warning.

He kicks his heels into the horse's sides and tugs at the reins. The CAMERA PANS ROUND as he rides off, keeping the Farmer in the foreground. The old man is scratching his head as he looks after Marco and then at the coin.

DISSOLVE TO:

176. SEMI-LONG SHOT—THE CREST OF A HILL—EXT. DAY (Location)

Marco rides over the hill, seen in silhouette against the sky. He reins in the horse, shading his eyes as he looks forward. Suddenly his face lights up.

CUT TO:

177. LONG SHOT—WHAT HE SEES—BINGUCCIO

From Marco's eyeline we can see the distant form of Binguccio on foot.

CUT TO:

178. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO

He cups his hands and shouts——

MARCO: Binguccio!

CUT TO:

179. LONG SHOT—BINGUCCIO—FROM MARCO'S EYELINE

He has not heard; he is walking wearily.

CUT TO:

180. MED. SHOT—MARCO

He shouts again——

MARCO: Binguccio!

Then he digs his heels into the horse's sides once more, with an effort urging it forward. With great effort he gets the horse to gallop.

DISSOLVE TO:

181. CLOSE MED. SHOT—BINGUCCIO ON FOOT—EXT. DAY (Location)

The CAMERA TRUCKS BEFORE BINGUCCIO as he walks along. The sound of approaching hoof beats is heard. Binguccio's eyes open. He glances over his shoulder, suddenly wide awake and alarmed.

CUT TO:

182. LONG SHOT—WHAT BINGUCCIO SEES—UP THE TRACK

Marco is riding down the track in pursuit—hardly recognizable to Binguccio at this distance and in his tattered state.

CUT TO:

183. CLOSE MED. SHOT—BINGUCCIO

He is terrified. He runs quickly.

CUT TO:

184. CLOSE MED. SHOT—MARCO

The CAMERA TRUCKS BEFORE HIM as he urges his horse on shouting——

MARCO: Binguccio!

CUT TO:

185. LONG SHOT—TRACK DOWN SIDE OF HILL—(Location)

Binguccio races down the hill—Marco after him.

CUT TO:

186. CLOSE MED. SHOT—BINGUCCIO

The CAMERA MOVES WITH BINGUCCIO who is running.

CUT TO:

187. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO'S FACE

Marco shouts again with all the strength of his lungs.

MARCO: Binguccio!

CUT TO:

188. LONG SHOT—UP TRACK

Binguccio is running desperately forward, with Marco only a few yards behind him. The road takes a curve, but Binguccio, looking back at his pursuer, continues straight on off the road, over a slight precipice, and falls out of sight.

189. SEMI-LONG SHOT—MARCO POLO

He rides up to the precipice, looks down and laughs.

CUT TO:

190. MED. CLOSE SHOT—BINGUCCIO IN STAGNANT POND

CUT TO:

191. SEMI-LONG SHOT—MARCO BY POND

Marco laughs as he says——

MARCO: Binguccio! What are you doing in there—fishing?

CUT TO:

192. CLOSE SHOT—BINGUCCIO

Getting out of the brook, approaching Marco.

BINGUCCIO: Master Marco! Praised be the blessed saints!

CUT TO:

193. MED. SHOT—MARCO AND BINGUCCIO

Marco gets down off his horse and goes to help Binguccio.

MARCO: Stop praising the saints and get up behind me.

Marco extends his hand to help Binguccio up the slight precipice. The horse lets out a whinny the minute Marco has been out of reach, and dashes back where he came from.

CUT TO:

194. LONG SHOT—HORSE BEATING IT LIKE HELL

CUT TO:

195. SHOT—BINGUCCIO—MARCO

BINGUCCIO: If you don't mind my saying so, Master Marco, this trip hasn't been very successful so far.

MARCO: How do the feet feel?

BINGUCCIO: They haven't got much confidence.

MARCO: Well, start them moving again.

BINGUCCIO: Which direction now?

CUT TO:

196. MED. SHOT—MARCO AND BINGUCCIO

MARCO, *with resolution:* Pekin. We're going back to Pekin. I want to have a little talk with Ahmed.

BINGUCCIO, *hysterically:* But he will kill us. He will——

MARCO, *starts to move forward:* Come on. We'll try this road.

They start forward, the CAMERA TRUCKING WITH THEM.

BINGUCCIO, *stumbling, mumbling, after Marco:* Why did I ever leave Venice? Lovely Venice! Home of my ancestors. Why did I ever leave . . . ? I would even welcome the sight of my wife now. . . .

DISSOLVE TO:

(197. OUT)

198. FULL FIGURE SHOT—MARCO AND BINGUCCIO TRUDGING ALONG—NIGHT

CAMERA PANS with them a very short distance past a large rock on a ledge; just above their heads where they can't see him is a Tartar sentry. They pass the rock and see through some bushes a LONG SHOT of a small outpost camp of Kaidu's army. The sentry drops quietly to the ground and stealthily follows them. Marco and Binguccio crouch down behind the bushes looking at the camp—CAMERA BEHIND THEM.

199. CLOSE SHOT MARCO AND BINGUCCIO

Looking at camp.

BINGUCCIO: Soldiers.

Sentry enters with his spear ready.

SENTRY: Captain of the Guard.

Marco and Binguccio turn.

CUT TO:

(200. OUT)

201. CLOSER SHOT—MARCO AND BINGUCCIO

They are looking at the camp. Captain and several soldiers running and surrounding Marco and Binguccio.

CAPTAIN: Who are you?

MARCO: Two citizens of Venice, in the Empire of Rome. We are on our way to Pekin.

BINGUCCIO, *hastily:* But we are your friends—whoever you are.

CAPTAIN: Search them.

Instantly soldiers are searching them. From Marco's pouch is produced a sack of gold pieces, and his treasure bag. CAMERA PANS TO THE CAPTAIN.

CAPTAIN: What's this? (*looks in treasure bag, looks up, puzzled*)

MARCO: As you see—worthless. But in the other bag I have some gold. I'd like to buy some food and two horses. . . .

CAPTAIN, *throwing the treasure bag to Marco, keeping the bag of gold:* And some wine and a few beautiful women, no doubt. Well—I'm not a merchant. Take him to Lord Kaidu.

MARCO: Kaidu! Are you Kaidu's men?

CAPTAIN, *laughs:* You didn't know that, did you—spy.

MARCO: I tell you—we're Venetian citizens. You can't do this. . . .

The Captain laughs loudly as Marco and Binguccio are dragged away.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

202. CLOSE SHOT—TARTAR BUGLER BLOWING BUGLE—EXT. DAWN

CUT TO:

203. LONG SHOT—KAIDU'S CAMP (Combination Painting & Set)—EXT. DAWN

Kaidu's banner in background. Tents and marquees surround a great open space on which stands the bugler. Tartar tents are disgorging soldiers who come running towards the smoking mud ovens in the foreground.

CUT TO:

204. KAIDU'S TENT—NAZAMA IN BED—INT. DAY

Nazama, Kaidu's wife, lies among silken cushions and *quilted coverlets. Her bed has typical Chinese coal bed-warmer with heated coals and scuttle. (BE SURE TO FEATURE THIS PROP IN BED SHOT.) She is looking past the CAMERA languorously and passionately.*

NAZAMA: Kaidu, my beloved! Come to me and hold me in your arms.

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK to include Kaidu, who stands in the tent, buckling on his armor, busily and hurriedly, and annoyed.

NAZAMA, *vehemently:* Are you my husband? Are you a man? Or are you nothing but a great hulking animal who can do nothing but *work*—like the oxen that haul your war machines? Your belt's on crooked.

Kaidu, annoyed, does not straighten his belt. He buckles on his sword.

I know, you're a commander of a great army, you have many heavy responsibilities to bear, and (*contemptuously*) tonight your heavy responsibilities will put you to sleep before you've finished guzzling your supper. (*screams*) Fix your belt!

Kaidu fixes his belt, turns to her. Nazama pokes the hot coals and angrily warms her feet.

KAIDU: I love you, Nazama. I love you better than all the birds and all the flowers and all the stars in all the heavens——

During this Nazama has picked up a piece of coal and throws it at him. He ducks out.

CUT TO:

205. CLOSE MED. SHOT—OUTSIDE MARQUEE—EXT. DAY

Kaidu comes rapidly out of the marquee, letting the door flap fall swiftly behind him. An officer standing beyond snaps to attention. At the same moment we hear *another piece of coal hit the other side of the flap. Kaidu glances at it and mutters——*

KAIDU: Curse that woman!

The Officer thinks he has been spoken to——

OFFICER: What did you say, Lord Kaidu?

KAIDU: What? Nothing! Make your reports.

The Officer presents a sheaf of papers which Kaidu glances through.

OFFICER: Over a thousand more desertions. The soldiers in the seventh corps mutinied last night. The food supply is failing. There's treason everywhere——

Kaidu starts walking, the Officer beside him and the CAMERA TRUCKING BEFORE HIM.

KAIDU: That's enough! It's the work of Ahmed's agents. Why in the name of all the seventeen devils don't you ever catch any of them?

He has come to the door of another tent—about to enter it. Something inside catches his eye. He stops dead, his expression changing.

CUT TO:

206. SEMI-LONG SHOT—WHAT HE SEES—A SERVING MAID IN MAIN TENT INT. DAY

Beside a table on which breakfast has been laid, stands a beautiful serving maid. She smiles at Kaidu.

CUT TO:

207. CLOSE MED. SHOT—BY MAIN TENT DOOR—EXT. DAY

Kaidu is looking at the serving maid. He half smiles, preening himself; then he suddenly realizes his officer is still beside him.

KAIDU, *barks:* Get out! And don't come back until you have some prisoners for me.

The officer salutes a little nervously.

OFFICER: Yes, Lord Kaidu (*and departs*).

Kaidu glances after him angrily, then remembers the serving maid, adjusts his collar much as the man of today will adjust his tie, and goes forward into the tent.

CUT TO:

208. MED. SHOT—MAIN TENT INT. DAY

Kaidu smiles, patronizingly but admiringly at the serving maid as he comes to the table, sitting, taking a large side of meat which he cuts apart with a huge knife.

CUT TO:

209. MED. SHOT—KAIDU AND SERVING MAID

Kaidu glances at the serving maid, she smiles. He beams. His mouth is full as he says——

KAIDU: Come here!

The serving maid approaches timidly. Kaidu strokes his hand approvingly down her arm.

You're a nice little thing. Quiet . . . timid . . . respectful. That's the way a woman ought to be.

MAID: Thank you, Lord Kaidu.

KAIDU: Suppose you had a man of your own, and you loved him. Would you expect him to be paying attention to you and only you every minute of the day and night?

MAID: Oh, no. I'd only be grateful for any favors my lord and master might care to give me.

Kaidu nods and beams.

KAIDU: You're a smart girl. When a man was tired, you'd soothe him . . . you'd give him the kind of love he needs. Love that's soft and tender and sweet . . .

Suddenly he stops. The shadow of someone entering the door has fallen across the table. At once he gives the girl *a brutal shove away and starts to roar as he bangs his mug down on the table.*

A black curse on this goat's milk! It's sour again!

CUT TO:

210. CLOSE SHOT—NAZAMA IN DOORWAY

She is looking forward suspiciously, at Kaidu. Kaidu is roaring out of the Shot——

KAIDU, *voice only:* Let the mare that gave this be fed to the dogs!

CUT TO:

211. CLOSE MED. SHOT—KAIDU AND SERVING MAID

The maid is cowering away, bewildered. Kaidu, feeling he has put up sufficient show, glances towards the door. He feigns pleased surprise.

KAIDU: Ah! Nazama, my love—just in time for breakfast.

Nazama enters the Shot. She looks witheringly at the Serving Maid who holds the glance for one moment, then bolts out of the Shot, the CAMERA PANNING to include her departure through the door. Nazama looks after her ominously.

NAZAMA: Where did that come from?

KAIDU: What?

NAZAMA, *bitterly:* That.

KAIDU, *eating furiously:* Oh!—*her!* I don't know. Never saw her before. Marvelous fruit in this part of the country. What there is of it. Have one, dear. Very excellent for you. Nothing better than having a bit of fruit in the morning.

Nazama sits, cold, knowing Kaidu has been trying to change the subject.

CUT TO:

212. MED. CLOSE SHOT—NAZAMA AND KAIDU

NAZAMA: Have you ever seen me so much as *look* at another man since we were married?

KAIDU, *somewhat regretfully:* No, love of my life. I must admit, I haven't.

NAZAMA, *through her teeth:* Then don't let me ever catch you casting sheep's eyes at any other woman!

She bites viciously into a piece of fruit as though it were Kaidu's neck.

KAIDU: No . . . love of my life . . . I'll never do that . . . as long as you're so close to me.

DISSOLVE TO:

213. SEMI-LONG SHOT—THE PRISONERS BESIDE LINES OF SOLDIERS

Marco, Binguccio and the other prisoners are being marched along beside a line of formed up troops, the soldiers jeering and shouting as they pass.

SOLDIERS: Kill the dirty spies! Death to Kublai Khan! Death to Ahmed! Death of the thousand cuts to these spies, *etc., etc.*

CAMERA TRUCKS with Binguccio and Marco coming to the foreground of the Shot. The Guard halts them.

GUARD: Halt!

The prisoners are lined up in front of the waiting troops. Marco looks forward past the CAMERA.

CUT TO:

214. FULL SHOT—INT. MAIN TENT

Kaidu and Nazama are sitting in their chairs on the platform. Officers and soldiers on either side of them.

Kaidu's banner in the background. An Officer steps forward raising his arm—

OFFICER: Lord Kaidu!

CUT TO:

215. SEMI-LONG SHOT ON THE PLATFORM

Kaidu and Nazama sit on luxurious couches. Staff Officers are standing around them. Kaidu asks——

KAIDU: Who's first?

The Chief Staff Officer, who stands just below in the foreground replies——

OFFICER: Case of Soon Chung, Captain of the Second Corps . . .

Kaidu looks forward past the CAMERA——

CUT TO:

216. SEMI-LONG SHOT—DOWN SHOT FROM KAIDU'S EYELINE

Soon Chung is being brought forward between guards. Some half dozen soldiers step forward as witnesses. Soon is an evil-looking brute.

CUT TO:

217. MED. CLOSE SHOT—KAIDU, OFFICER, ETC.

He looks forward at Soon.

KAIDU: Soon Chung! What's the charge?

OFFICER: That he wilfully and brutally put to death eight of his men without giving them benefit of trial.

SOON, *surlily:* It was necessary for discipline!

KAIDU: Then it's bad discipline—when we need every man we can get. Who are the witnesses?

The Staff Officer indicates the soldier witnesses who step forward.

OFFICER: These men of Soon Chung's command.

KAIDU: Well—speak up!

SECOND SOLDIER: All these men that he killed were good soldiers—devoted to you, Lord Kaidu, willing to give up their lives fighting for you.

CUT TO:

218. CLOSE SHOT—NAZAMA

She yawns—bored. But suddenly she sees Marco. Over this we hear the First Soldier saying——

FIRST SOLDIER: We know we'll get justice from you, Lord Kaidu. We demand the death of this murderer.

CUT TO:

219. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO

He is looking as if at Nazama, conscious of the interest. He gives a little smile.

CUT TO:

220. CLOSE MED. SHOT—PAST NAZAMA'S FACE—WITH KAIDU AND SOON BEYOND

Nazama is pleased—but suddenly realizes that she shouldn't show it. She pretends to frown at Marco's impudence and looks away. But she cannot resist a look at Marco again.

During this Soon is saying——

SOON: All right, Lord Kaidu. Put me to death! But if you do—you'll find that no soldier in this army will obey any command from any officer—including you.

CUT TO:

221. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO

As Nazama looks at him again he smiles more boldly. He raises his eyebrows discreetly.

CUT TO:

222. CLOSE MED. SHOT—KAIDU AND NAZAMA

Nazama gives a slight lift to her eyebrows in return. Kaidu is saying——

KAIDU: I'll have to think this over—and make my decision later. Next case!

He turns to Nazama.

That Soon Chung is one of the worst brutes in the army. I'd like to kill him with my own hands. But he's right—if I punish him publicly . . .

His voice dies as he realizes that Nazama is paying him no attention. She is looking forward as if at Marco. Kaidu is puzzled. He follows her eyes.

KAIDU: Who is this?

CUT TO:

223. MED. SHOT—MARCO AND BINGUCCIO

They are closely guarded and the Captain of the troop stands beside them.

CAPTAIN: My troop was camped last night in the Meiji Pass and we caught these two men spying on us.

MARCO: My name is Marco Polo, Lord Kaidu, representative of Polo Brothers, honorable merchants and this is my . . . bookkeeper. . . .

The Captain comes forward, producing the passport—the CAMERA CRANING BACK to include Kaidu and Nazama.

KAIDU: Have you anything to say for yourself?

MARCO: We are only commercial travelers, Lord Kaidu—from Venice.

KAIDU: Venice? Never heard of it. Where is it?

MARCO, *proudly, pointing:* Far across the ocean, to the West.

KAIDU, *laughs:* Then why were you coming through Meiji Pass, which has always been East of here?

As Marco starts to speak——

Torture them a little. Maybe by that time he will come from the South.

As the men start to take them, Marco turns quickly, looks at Nazama and decides to take a chance.

MARCO: May I make one suggestion?

CUT TO:

224. MED. SHOT—NAZAMA, KAIDU AND MARCO

Kaidu is amazed.

KAIDU: Suggestion? About what?

MARCO: About this case you just heard—this Soon Chung. It's quite a ticklish problem for you; I can see that. But I think I know how you can settle it.

Kaidu rises, angry——

KAIDU: I don't know who or what you are . . . but . . . by all the snakes in Turkestan . . . you deserve credit for having reached the topmost heights in impudence! Drop him in the boiling oil!

CUT TO:

225. SEMI-LONG SHOT—MARCO FROM PLATFORM

Guards leap forward seizing Marco's arms.

CUT TO:

226. CLOSE MED. SHOT—PAST NAZAMA'S FACE—KAIDU AND MARCO BEYOND

Nazama rises sharply——

NAZAMA: No! Wait!

KAIDU: For what?

Nazama looks at her amazed husband—the first time her eyes have left Marco's face for a very long time——

NAZAMA: I think you should hear this man's suggestion.

KAIDU: Why?

NAZAMA: He looks to me as if he might have some intelligence.

She looks at Marco again.

CUT TO:

227. CLOSE MED. SHOT—FAVORING KAIDU

His amazed eyes go from Nazama's face to Marco's, then back again—and there is born in his mind the beautiful hope that maybe she is taking an interest in this prisoner. He looks at Marco again with new interest.

KAIDU: Very well. What is it?

Marco glances at Nazama then comes forward to Kaidu, whispering in his ear, the CAMERA TRUCKING INTO CLOSER SHOT. As Marco finishes whispering, Kaidu grins. Nazama smiles at Marco.

NAZAMA: I knew it would be a good suggestion!

KAIDU: Soon Chung!

CUT TO:

228. SEMI-LONG SHOT—DOWN SHOT PAST KAIDU'S FACE—SOON BEYOND

Soon approaches. Marco has automatically taken up his position on Kaidu's left. Kaidu addresses Soon——

KAIDU: I acquit you of the charges against you and set you free.

SOON: Thank you, Lord Kaidu.

He positively swells as he bows.

CUT TO:

229. MED. SHOT—SOON AND WITNESSES

Soon casts a look of extreme menace at the men who have testified against him, then passes on out of the Shot, shouldering his way through the standing troops. The witnesses shrink horrified. Kaidu's voice is heard out of the Shot——

KAIDU, *voice only:* You men—come here!

The men turn, frightened, then come forward, expecting the worst.

CUT TO:

230. SEMI-LONG SHOT—THE WITNESSES PAST KAIDU'S FACE

The men approach the platform. Kaidu beckons for them to ascend the steps and as they do so he leans forward, speaking to them confidentially——

KAIDU: And I will also set free any man who kills him.

The soldiers' faces light up. Their hands go sharply to their swords. They bow swiftly to Kaidu, turn and go quickly after Soon Chung, jostling their way through the troops in their hurry to catch up with their quarry. Kaidu smiles at Marco——

Do you have many ideas as clever as that?

MARCO: Oh yes, sir. I can think of all sorts of things, especially when I'm facing death.

NAZAMA: Where do you come from?

MARCO, *smiling attractively:* From Venice, my lady—a beautiful city, sometimes known as the home of romance, far, far away in the West.

NAZAMA: What is your occupation?

MARCO, *his eyes on her:* My occupation is . . . looking. . . .

KAIDU, *sharply:* Some people call it spying.

MARCO: Perhaps it is, my lord. But not in the political sense.

CUT TO:

231. CLOSE MED. SHOT—NAZAMA, KAIDU, MARCO—FAVORING KAIDU, CENTER

Marco looks at Nazama again as he says——

MARCO: I have wandered over the face of the earth—looking for the greatest of God's creations—a truly lovely woman.

NAZAMA: Have you found her?

MARCO, *right at her:* I am your prisoner, my lady. And under the circumstances, if I told you the truth, I would be accused of hypocrisy.

Nazama crossed down to Marco. During this Kaidu's eyes have gone from Marco's face to Nazama's and back again. He is surprised and delighted at his wife's reactions to Marco's charm and is listening with fascinated attention. Nazama seems to have forgotten him completely.

NAZAMA: You speak curiously. What is your name?

MARCO: Marco Polo, my lady. Just a humble gentleman with a well trained pair of eyes.

Nazama lowers her eyes, overcome for the first time in her life. Kaidu looks at her, then at Marco, then smiles slowly, extreme pleasure in his eyes.

NAZAMA, *turning to Kaidu:* Obviously, my love, this gentleman is not a spy.

KAIDU: Oh, obviously, my love, obviously.

Nazama exits. Kaidu looks around the room.

KAIDU: Leave me!

Marco, after a moment of indecision, starts to go.

KAIDU: Not you, Marco Polo.

The officers are puzzled, but they and the guards exit leaving Kaidu and Marco. Kaidu rises and goes over to a small table where there are a couple of chairs. He indicates a chair at the table, pours out a large stoup of wine.

KAIDU: Sit down. Have a drink. I want you to enjoy the best I have to offer.

MARCO: Thank you.

He sits, surprised and pleased. Meanwhile Kaidu takes a swig at his cup, and says to Marco——

KAIDU: I think you'll like this wine. It is made from fruits that grow in the green valleys of Kashmir.

MARCO, *drinks:* Very refreshing. And now, Lord Kaidu, when may I be on my way?

KAIDU: Not for quite a while, I'm afraid.

Marco is surprised.

MARCO: You mean . . . I'm still a prisoner?

KAIDU: In a way . . . yes. I mean, if you make any attempt to escape, or shirk your duties, you will be put to death.

MARCO: Duties? What duties?

KAIDU: My friend, for years I have been looking for a man who could divert my wife's attention. You seem to be the one who can do it. So you will go to her, and be charming, and keep on being charming—until I tell you to stop.

MARCO: Suppose my charm gives out?

KAIDU: We'll keep the oil boiling.

CUT TO:

232. KAIDU'S TENT—INT. NIGHT (BREAKFAST TENT)

Kaidu has the little Maid on his knee as he lolls on a couch in the Breakfast Tent. He rubs noses with her—then looks into her eyes which are quite worried. She glances toward the door—

KAIDU: But why don't you cheer up—smile at me? Don't you like me?

MAID: I'm in awful fear, my lord.

KAIDU: Oh, now—you mustn't be afraid. I'm not so ugly as I look.

MAID: It's fear of your wife, my lord. She may come here at any moment.

KAIDU: My wife! (*he laughs*) *She* won't come here. I've made wonderful arrangements for *her!*

The Maid is reassured. She laughs happily as she lets herself be drawn into his arms.

CUT TO:

233. CLOSE SHOT—NAZAMA—IN KAIDU'S MARQUEE—INT. NIGHT

A delicate wine glass is by her lips. She is laughing with great animation.

NAZAMA: Oh, that's very funny! You've had a marvelous life, Marco Polo!

CAMERA PULLS BACK to show that she is reclining on a silken couch in Kaidu's Marquee. She is bright-eyed and happy. Marco sits awkwardly on the end of the couch—just as far away from her as is possible.

MARCO: It's no credit to me, my lady. Things have just happened to me . . . that's all.

NAZAMA: You've *made* them happen! I can see that.

During these speeches Nazama starts to move toward Marco when her maid enters with coal scuttle. She shovels a few pieces of coal onto Nazama's bed stove, lays the scuttle in its position near the couch and leaves the tent. During this Marco has been following the maid's movements with curiosity and nervousness. Nazama is impatient and immediately after the maid leaves she moves closer to Marco.

Why aren't other men as wise as you?

MARCO: Oh . . . I . . . I suppose some of them are—a few of them.

NAZAMA: *You* don't run away from happiness—*you're* not afraid to reach out and take it.

Eliminate beds from scene.

She lifts her lips towards his, languorously, Marco's nervousness is increasing.

MARCO: Well, I . . . I always just ask myself . . . "Why not?"

He obeys slowly, coming closer to her upturned face. They rub noses.

DISSOLVE TO:

234. INT. MARCO'S TENT—NIGHT

Binguccio is in bed. Marco enters and Binguccio hoists himself on his elbow and speaks ironically.

BINGUCCIO: Well, Marco . . . I hope you're pleased with yourself.

MARCO, *mechanically:* What?

BINGUCCIO: Made another conquest, haven't you? Have you forgotten that there are women in Venice, too?

MARCO, *holding up piece of coal more to himself than to Binguccio:* I could have had a piece of jade as big as this. . . .

BINGUCCIO, *jumping up:* Jade?

Marco looks at Binguccio, smiles and shakes his head.

MARCO: I took this instead.

Binguccio takes the coal in his hand, looks at it, gets his hand dirty.

BINGUCCIO: Are you crazy? This is nothing but a dirty piece of stone.

MARCO: But it burns. They call it coal.

Takes coal from Binguccio, goes near flap of tent where his bag is hanging and drops it in while Binguccio is talking.

BINGUCCIO: And you took that instead of a piece of jade. Fine presents for your father—a dried up white snake—a child's firecracker and some dirt that burns. It would be better if you put aside these foolish things and tried to think of some way for us to escape from here.

MARCO: Listen to me, Binguccio. I'm not staying here because I want to. But the instant that lady becomes bored, you and I will be popped into a big kettle of boiling oil. So you'd better be grateful to me for keeping your miserable body and soul together—and be patient until I think of some way to get back to Pekin alive.

FADE OUT

(235. OUT)
(236. OUT)

FADE IN:

237. MED. SHOT—THE LITTLE OLD MAN ON THE TOWER

He has his eye to the telescope. As the sound of the bell reverberates, he pipes.

LITTLE OLD MAN: All well to the West!

CAMERA PANS to the Palace steps and picks up messenger running up the steps.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

238. LONG SHOT THROUGH THE THRONE ROOM DOORS

As Messenger opens the doors. Ahmed is standing near the map with Bayan and two other officers.

MESSENGER: Excellency! A message has just arrived that the Emperor's army has been destroyed.

After the announcement he salutes and exits.

CUT TO:

239. CLOSER SHOT OF GROUP

AHMED: At last. I'm afraid this distressing news now forces me to marry the Princess and seize the throne.

Ahmed crosses to throne, sits and eats a sweetmeat and suddenly looks off scene.

CUT TO:

240. SEMI-LONG SHOT—THE CHAMBERLAIN ENTERING THRONE ROOM

As he comes up the floor he suddenly sees Ahmed on the throne. His eyes light up indignantly.

CUT TO:

241. CLOSE MED. SHOT—AHMED ON THE THRONE

He sees the Chamberlain approaching and smiles coolly.

AHMED: Well?

CHAMBERLAIN: By your leave, Excellency, you are sitting on the throne of Kublai Khan!

AHMED, *sitting back:* It is the throne of the ruler of this Empire. What do you want?

CHAMBERLAIN: The Persian Ambassador requests an audience.

AHMED: Ah! We shall see him.

CUT TO:

242. CLOSE SHOT—THE CHAMBERLAIN

Reacting and backing out of the room.

CUT TO:

243. CLOSE SHOT—AHMED

AHMED: I'm getting a little tired of the Persian Ambassador.

CUT TO:

244. LONG SHOT—PERSIAN AMBASSADOR APPROACHING

The Persian Ambassador is coming up the Throne Room. Two attendants walk at his heels—one carrying a jeweled casket.

CUT TO:

245. MED. SHOT—AHMED ON THRONE

Ahmed waves Bayan aside and rises, coming forward down the steps to meet the Ambassador——

AHMED: Your exalted excellency is a most welcome visitor.

The Ambassador enters the Shot, bowing low to Ahmed who stands just above him on the foot of the steps.

AMBASSADOR. His Majesty the King of Persia bids me remind the Minister of State that the night is but a week hence when the seventh moon will shine in all its mellow magnificence.

AHMED: I am sure we need no reminder of the happy event, which will strengthen the bonds that bind our great nations together.

AMBASSADOR: In expression of my master's impatient affection for his future bride, he bids me present this token.

He takes the jeweled casket from the attendant.

CUT TO:

246. CLOSE MED. SHOT—AHMED AND AMBASSADOR

The Ambassador presents the casket to Ahmed, who takes it and smiles.

AHMED: A most gracious gesture. Permit me to escort you to Her Highness.

The Ambassador bows, then turns with Ahmed toward Ahmed's quarters, CAMERA PANNING WITH THEM.

DISSOLVE TO:

247. CLOSE SHOT—DOOR TO AHMED'S QUARTERS—INT. DAY

They enter, Ahmed opens the door. The Ambassador *steps forward, but just as in the previous scene, Ahmed puts his arm in front of him, stopping him. The Ambassador looks a little alarmed, but Ahmed smiles reassuringly as he strikes the gong—the drawbridge descending.*

AHMED: I'm sure your royal master will be pleased to know that his future bride is kept in the strictest seclusion. . . . If your excellency will proceed.

The Ambassador goes forward across the bridge, Ahmed following.

CUT TO:

248. MED. SHOT—PLATFORM ON OTHER SIDE OF BRIDGE

The two walk into the Shot off the bridge. The Ambassador glances half nervously at the large guards. One of the guards throws open the grim-looking door which leads into Ahmed's apartment. Ahmed smiles and bows, indicating that the Ambassador shall enter. The Ambassador goes on—but even as he enters the room, the strong arms of Ahmed's murderous assistants seize him. The Ambassador struggles shouting desperately over his shoulder——

AMBASSADOR: What? What are you doing? Let me go! Ahmed! Ahmed! Help!

The door closes silencing his voice. Ahmed smiles and opens the jeweled casket, taking out an elaborate necklace of diamond and star sapphires. He looks at it with approval, then replaces it in the casket again and starts to come back across the drawbridge.

DISSOLVE TO:

249. CLOSE SHOT—KUKACHIN IN HER ROOM—INT. DAY

She is sitting by the window, looking out into the gar-

den. Suddenly she hears a noise at the door. She looks around sharply. She rises as she asks——

KUKACHIN: Who gave you permission to come to me, Ahmed?

CAMERA PULLS BACK as Ahmed enters the Shot. He places the casket on the lacquered table and takes out the necklace, coming to Kukachin and fastening it around her neck.

AHMED: I bring tribute to Your Highness.

KUKACHIN, *acidly:* And whom do I thank for this tribute?

AHMED: Please say no word of thanks. This is only a hint of the devotion of your most humble servant.

Kukachin takes off the necklace and gives it to Ahmed.

KUKACHIN: I return the hint, Ahmed. Take it and yourself away.

AHMED: I'm grateful for your superb hostility. It will be all the more pleasant to see you change—to watch the cold moon of your hatred as it gradually yields to the brilliant hot sun of love in your heart.

KUKACHIN: My father will punish you for your impudence.

AHMED: Your father was a great Emperor in his day. People will always remember him with affection.

KUKACHIN: What do you mean?

AHMED: I have melancholy news for you. Disaster has overtaken your father and his army.

KUKACHIN: Where is he?

AHMED: Perhaps in Japan; perhaps on the sea; perhaps under it. But I have consolation for you, Princess, you will not have to undertake the long and tiresome journey to Persia for I have decided that on the seventh moon you will be my wife, Princess Kukachin—

sharing my throne and my glory as sovereign of the greatest empire the world has ever known.

KUKACHIN: You beast!

AHMED: You don't at the moment think me qualified to be your husband. But time will convince you of your error. I have had seventy-eight wives already—and, I assure you, I have profited by experience.

Ahmed bows politely from the door then goes out, the door closing after him.

CUT TO:

250. CLOSE SHOT—KUKACHIN

She is staring after Ahmed terrified—bewildered. Suddenly she calls——

KUKACHIN: Visakha!

CUT TO:

251. MED. CLOSE SHOT—VISAKHA

Visakha, Kukachin's maid, comes through a tapestry curtain into the room.

VISAKHA: Your Highness?

KUKACHIN: It is eight days since Marco Polo started into the West. How far would he have gone?

VISAKHA: He would be in Chingtien by now, if he has travelled fast.

KUKACHIN: He *would* travel fast.

She goes quickly to a writing desk, CAMERA PANNING WITH HER as she takes a pen, starting to write——

I want you to take a message to the Tower of Eagles.

Visakha follows into the Shot, alarmed.

VISAKHA: But Ahmed's soldiers are all about us. They might not let me go to the Tower.

KUKACHIN, *writing:* You can get past them. They're men—and you're beautiful.

VISAKHA: Where shall this message be sent?

CUT TO:

252. CLOSE SHOT—KUKACHIN

She speaks as she writes——

KUKACHIN: To the West—to Marco Polo . . .

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

253. LONG UPSHOT—AN EAGLE FLYING—EXT. DAY

One of the messenger eagles with the cannister attached to its stomach.

CUT TO:

254. SEMI-LONG SHOT—TARTAR HORSEMEN—EXT. DAY

A troop of some half dozen horsemen are looking up as if at the Eagle. A soldier says——

SOLDIER: It's one of the Imperial Eagles.

The officer in charge draws his bow, shooting upward.

CUT TO:

255. LONG UPSHOT—THE EAGLE—EXT. DAY

The arrow hits it. It falls like a stone.

CUT TO:

256. CLOSE MED. SHOT—A TARTAR HORSEMAN

He swings his horse violently into Close Shot as he scoops up the fallen eagle and rides on.

HORSEMAN, *shouting:* To Lord Kaidu!

DISSOLVE TO:

257. MED. SHOT—LINE OF TENTS—EXT. DAY

Marco being marched down to Kaidu's tent.

CUT TO:

(258. OUT)

259. MED. SHOT—INT. MAIN TENT—DAY

Kaidu is seated on the platform, a Guard on either side. Inside the tent door, one Guard is on duty. (Throughout the entire Kaidu sequences, whenever we are in the main tent, this Guard is at the door.) Two or three Officers are with Kaidu, one of them being the Officer who brought the cannister from the eagle. They are looking at the note from the cannister.

CUT TO:

(260. OUT)

261. MED. SHOT—MAIN TENT—INT. DAY

Kaidu looks up, sees Marco.

KAIDU: Ah, our friend Marco Polo.

Marco enters. Kaidu holds out the note he has been reading.

Read it.

Marco takes the message and reads

MARCO: "Tell Marco Polo that I need him"—and there's the mark of an arrow.

He glances at Kaidu.

An arrow?

KAIDU: That is the mark of the Princess Kukachin.

CUT TO:

(262. OUT)

(263. OUT)

264. CLOSEUP—MARCO

KAIDU: What does it mean?

MARCO: I don't know. She must be in danger.

CUT TO:

265. CLOSEUP—KAIDU

KAIDU: You're quite a man, Marco Polo. The ladies are calling for you from all sides. What's your secret?

(266. OUT)

267. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO

MARCO, *desperately:* Kaidu! Let me go back. She is in danger. She must be desperate.

CUT TO:

268. CLOSE SHOT—KAIDU

KAIDU, *smiles:* Not so desperate as others I could name. No, my friend, you'll stay with us for a while.

CUT TO:

269. CLOSE TWO SHOT—MARCO AND KAIDU

MARCO, *very desperate:* Kaidu, listen to me!

KAIDU, *sharply, rising:* We will see you for dinner. And I give you a friendly warning, Marco Polo. Don't try for escape.

Marco looks at him, turns.

CUT TO:

270. *CAMERA TRUCKS WITH MARCO as he leaves the tent. Outside the tent he is joined by Binguccio.*

BINGUCCIO, *in a whisper:* Marco. Marco. His wife still likes you, doesn't she?

MARCO: Come on.

BINGUCCIO: Because I've just been looking at the boiling oil, and believe me——

MARCO: We've got to get out of here. I must get back to Pekin.

BINGUCCIO: Well, that's all right to say, but how? How can we get out?

271. OUTSIDE THEIR TENT DOOR

As Marco suddenly stops and stares.

CUT TO:

271-A. WHAT MARCO SEES

Guarding another tent close by is Toctai marching up and down outside the tent door.

CUT TO:

271-B. MARCO AND BINGUCCIO

Marco roughly pushes Binguccio into the tent and moves quickly in after him.

CUT TO:

271-C. INT. TENT—MARCO AND BINGUCCIO

MARCO, *sharply:* Who is that?

Marco lifts the flap of the tent and they both peer out.

CUT TO:

271-D. CLOSE SHOT—TOCTAI'S FACE

Showing scar.

CUT TO:

271-E. INT. TENT—MARCO AND BINGUCCIO

BINGUCCIO: As evil a looking fellow as ever I saw.

MARCO, *slowly:* I've seen that scar before. What is his name?

BINGUCCIO: *I* don't know. I don't want to know.

Marco isn't listening. He is desperately trying to remember.

MARCO, *suddenly:* Toctai! That's it—Toctai!

He parts the door flaps again, calling through it softly.

Toctai. Toctai.

CUT TO:

271-F. CLOSE MED. SHOT—TOCTAI

Toctai turns to face the voice. He turns, frozen, staring. Marco's voice speaks out of the Shot.

MARCO'S VOICE: Come in here, Toctai.

Toctai comes forward, CAMERA PULLING BACK BEFORE HIM as he comes through the flap into the tent. He is staring at Marco, who asks

MARCO: You remember me, Toctai?

Toctai's eyes go sharply in the direction of Binguccio.

CUT TO:

271-G. CLOSE MED. SHOT—MARCO AND TOCTAI

TOCTAI: I remember everyone. Why are you here?

MARCO, *looking at him:* Ahmed sent me.

TOCTAI: You want to kill Kaidu?

MARCO: Well, *Ahmed* says he must die.

TOCTAI: *You* will not kill him. That's *my* privilege.

MARCO: Of course. But I have just had a message from Ahmed.

TOCTAI: Yes?

MARCO, *looking at him:* He says the Princess is a prisoner.

TOCTAI, *contemptuously:* I know that. She's probably his wife by now.

Marco starts sharply.

And when he marries her and takes the throne, we'll all be great noblemen. What else does he say?

MARCO, *slowly, carefully:* He says we must strike at once—today.

TOCTAI: I am ready to strike. I have finally bribed my way to the position of night guard in Kaidu's tent, and if he is there tonight—— (*touches his spear*)

MARCO: He'll be there. I will keep him there for you.

TOCTAI: Good. And we shall escape by the North Pass. The horses will be waiting for us.

There are the sounds of approaching Guards and Toctai turns and exits cautiously.

CUT TO:

271-H. MED. SHOT—BINGUCCIO AND MARCO

BINGUCCIO, *horrified:* Marco! You are going to kill Kaidu?

MARCO, *with a half smile:* No. Toctai is going to kill Kaidu—or die in the attempt.

DISSOLVE TO:

271-I. LONG SHOT—MAIN TENT—INT. NIGHT

Dinner table, with Marco, Nazama and Kaidu around it. A servant has just finished clearing the last dishes away. From behind the diners we see two men playing on Chinese musical instruments and a girl, who is singing and making dancing motions. CAMERA MOVES CLOSER to show Kaidu staring across at the girl and Nazama looking eagerly at Marco.

NAZAMA, *to Marco:* It would be lovely if we could be alone.

271-J. CLOSE SHOT OF THE THREE OF THEM

As Marco looks at Kaidu, who has his head turned, looking at the girl.

MARCO, *to Nazama:* Aren't you jealous?

NAZAMA, *leering:* Not any more.

The music stops and the girl and musicians come forward, bowing.

271-K. CLOSE SHOT—KAIDU AND GIRL

As he throws her some coins. She bows and looks up at him. He rises as the girl and the musicians disappear.

CUT TO:

271-L. MED. SHOT—KAIDU, MARCO AND NAZAMA AT TABLE

As Kaidu starts to move away.

KAIDU: If you don't mind, Nazama, I think I'll get a little fresh air.

NAZAMA, *waving her hand:* No, darling, fresh air is excellent for you.

271-M. CLOSE SHOT—KAIDU

As he stops, surprised and pleased, and then starts quickly to move again.

CUT TO:

271-N. MARCO AND NAZAMA AT TABLE

> MARCO, *rises, speaks almost desperately:* No. No, Kaidu. Don't go. You have entertained me with your wonderful native music. Now I would like you to hear some music from my land.

Kaidu turns back, polite but irritated, as Marco calls——

> MARCO: Binguccio. Binguccio. (*to Nazama and Kaidu*) He's a very fine singer. You will enjoy him, Kaidu.

CUT TO:

271-O. BINGUCCIO ENTERING TENT

CUT TO:

271-P. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO

Trying to make faces at Binguccio.

> MARCO: Take the instrument and sing your loveliest song, Binguccio.

CUT TO:

271-Q. BINGUCCIO

> BINGUCCIO, *bewildered:* What? You know I cannot sing. How often have you quieted me from just such noise?

CUT TO:

271-R. MED. SHOT—TABLE

Marco is frowning at Binguccio.

> MARCO: He is modest. (*sharply*) Sing.

CUT TO:

271-S. SHOT OF BINGUCCIO

He takes up the lyre and starts to sing, very badly, an equally bad, dull song.

CUT TO:

271-T. MED. SHOT—MARCO, NAZAMA AND KAIDU

As they listen to the music.

NAZAMA: What type of music is that?

MARCO: That is a gondolier's song.

KAIDU, *yawning:* And what is a gondolier?

MARCO: He is a man in a boat. You see, we have a great deal of water in Venice and we swim or use boats to get about.

NAZAMA: Swim?

MARCO, *turning slightly, to frown at a particularly bad sound from Binguccio:* Yes. We swim from house to house.

NAZAMA: Doesn't it tire you out?

MARCO: Oh, no. It's very invigorating.

NAZAMA: Evidently.

Marco looks up sharply, and we

CUT TO:

271-U. TOCTAI AND PREVIOUS GUARD

The music stops short. Old Guard salutes Toctai. Toctai salutes back and begins pacing the interior of the tent.

CUT BACK TO:

271-V. MARCO AND BINGUCCIO

MARCO, *shaking Binguccio:* Sing and control your foolish nerves.

CUT TO:

271-W. MED. SHOT—KAIDU, NAZAMA AND MARCO

As Kaidu rises, yawning.

KAIDU: Your native music is magnificent, Master Marco, but I am one who dislikes *all* music.

MARCO, *hastily, putting out a restraining hand:* But with it goes a game, Kaidu, that I wish to teach you. (*looks around desperately at Nazama, who has also risen*)

KAIDU: Yes, of course, but I am tired.

CUT TO:

271-X. TOCTAI AT DOOR

He has turned, putting his hand on the javelin, and is staring at Marco.

CUT TO:

271-Y. CLOSE SHOT—TABLE

As Marco makes a restraining motion with his head to Toctai.

NAZAMA: There are many nights for games, but there are few months with so lovely a moon.

MARCO: Please, Kaidu. You will enjoy this game. (*practically forces Kaidu back into chair*) Now you sit here. (*turns to Nazama, motions to a chair a little behind the table*) And you sit there. Now, this is a game involving——

CUT TO:

271-Z. SHOT OF BINGUCCIO

He is staring at Kaidu and his singing has now become almost childish hysterical screaming.

CUT TO:

271-AA. MARCO AND KAIDU AT TABLE

MARCO: Kaidu, your shield is too heavy for this game. (*reaches over to take shield, as if to put it down some place else*)

KAIDU, *irritated:* I can think of more important things I can be doing than playing games.

NAZAMA, *brightly:* What do I do?

CUT TO:

271-BB. BINGUCCIO

He is rising, jabbering.

BINGUCCIO: And what do *I* do?

He turns to back away, as we

CUT TO:

271-CC. MARCO WITH SHIELD

He nods and motions to Toctai and leans slightly over table as if he were about to illustrate a game.

CUT TO:

271-DD. CLOSE SHOT—TOCTAI

He draws javelin and, as his arm is seen hurling it we

CUT TO:

271-EE. CLOSE TWO SHOT—MARCO AND KAIDU

Marco turns the shield just in time to stop the javelin. Nazama screams, and two guards rush in from outside and grapple with Toctai.

MARCO: That is one of Ahmed's men!

KAIDU: Seize him!

CUT TO:

271-FF. MED. SHOT—TOCTAI AND GUARDS

As they are trying to overpower Toctai.

TOCTAI, *screaming:* You . . . you . . . traitor! He trapped me. You . . .

CUT TO:

272. SHOT OF KAIDU, MARCO AND NAZAMA

KAIDU: Take him out. Take him away.

Toctai's voice is heard as he is being dragged out.

TOCTAI'S VOICE: You . . . you . . .

Nazama feels Marco's arm, which held the shield, and she looks at him with adoration.

KAIDU, *to Marco:* You saved my life.

MARCO: It was nothing personal, Kaidu. It's just that I'd do anything to annoy Ahmed.

KAIDU: Nevertheless, I'm not lying on the floor with a javelin through my middle—and I thank you, Marco Polo. Come with me, Marco.

Marco is about to follow, but Nazama restrains him, squeezing his hand——

NAZAMA: You're magnificent!

MARCO: I'm glad your husband thinks so.

Marco releases himself and goes, leaving Nazama gazing after him adoringly.

DISSOLVE TO:

273. MED. SHOT—KAIDU'S HEADQUARTERS TENT—INT. DAY

Kaidu and Marco enter quickly, the CAMERA MOVING WITH THEM as they go to the table. Both men are at a high pitch of excitement. The scene is played quickly with Kaidu restlessly pacing about.

KAIDU: How did you know that man was going to kill me?

MARCO: I too have been doing a little spying. And now let me ask you something. Why are you in revolt against the Emperor?

KAIDU: Because my people have been taxed to the point of starvation. I don't mind paying proper tribute to Kublai Khan. But I won't pay taxes to Ahmed for his private treasury. I and my people would rather die fighting.

MARCO: Ahmed, eh? (*gets up*) I don't blame you. There is one thing more you ought to know.

KAIDU: What?

MARCO: You must take your army to Pekin—storm the palace . . .

Kaidu almost laughs.

KAIDU: My army—against all the forces of Kublai Khan?

Marco leans across the table speaking seriously——

MARCO: Kublai Khan and his forces have gone to war against Japan. And with the Emperor away, Ahmed is in command in the palace. That's what the message from the Princess meant. Ahmed is going to marry her and make himself Emperor.

Kaidu stops dead in his pacing, looking at Marco——

KAIDU: Ahmed! Emperor of China! Better the Black Plague!

MARCO: You're the only one that can prevent it. The road to Pekin is open to you. No one can stop you!

KAIDU: But the palace walls. When I get to them—what can I do? I have no siege machinery.

MARCO: You'll have to leave it to me to get you through the walls.

Kaidu, who has commenced pacing again, now stops, facing Marco across the table.

KAIDU: What makes you think *you* can do it?

MARCO: I've been right so far, haven't I?

KAIDU: Yes—but there must be a limit to everything—even to your luck. Nevertheless, I owe you a debt which must be paid. You saved my life, and you can name three wishes which I will grant if it's in my power to do so. What are they?

CUT TO:

274. CLOSE MED. SHOT—FAVORING MARCO

Marco's eyes light up as he realizes that this is his big chance. After a momentary pause he speaks——

MARCO: First, give me the swiftest horse you have.

KAIDU: And second?

MARCO: Give me an hour's start—before you tell your wife I've gone.

KAIDU, *grins:* And what is your third wish?

Marco hesitates, then smiles.

MARCO: I prefer to reserve that, 'til later.

KAIDU: Very well. Come on.

He starts to lead the way out as we

DISSOLVE TO:

275. MED. SHOT—BY KAIDU'S TENT—EXT. DAY

Marco and Kaidu are talking. Marco is dressed in Tartar uniform and carries Kaidu's shield. In the background is a fine Arab steed, being held by a soldier. Guards and Officers are beyond.

MARCO: Every moment you delay gives Ahmed time to increase his strength. If you wait too long, Kaidu——

Binguccio's frantic voice is heard out of the Shot——

BINGUCCIO, *voice only:* Marco! Master Marco!

Marco and Kaidu both turn their heads in the direction of the shout. Binguccio enters the Shot, coming to Marco.

BINGUCCIO: Where are you going?

MARCO: To Pekin!

BINGUCCIO: To Pekin! And what's going to become of me? You're leaving me alone among all these cut-throats?

MARCO, *motions:* I'll see you in Pekin. Lord Kaidu will take care of you, and if he's too busy, there's always Lady Kaidu.

He wheels his horse as if to go.

CUT TO:

276. SEMI-LONG SHOT—DOOR OF NAZAMA'S TENT—EXT. DAY

Nazama rushes out, shouting.

NAZAMA: Marco Polo!

She runs forward desperately.

CUT TO:

277. MED. SHOT—MARCO, KAIDU, BINGUCCIO

Marco is looking back as if towards Nazama, terrified. Without any further hesitation he lifts his hand in farewell to Kaidu.

MARCO: Good-bye!

And at the same time spurs his horse forward through the gates, CAMERA PANNING to include his departure. Both Binguccio and Kaidu shout after him——

BINGUCCIO: Master Marco!

KAIDU: How about that third wish?

Marco calls back over his shoulder——

MARCO: Later!

As he disappears in a cloud of dust beyond the gates, Nazama runs into the Shot. She gasps——

NAZAMA: Marco! Marco!

She turns ferociously on her husband——

Where has he gone?

Kaidu speaks awkwardly——

KAIDU: I'm sorry, my love. He got away from me.

NAZAMA: Go after him! Bring him back!

Kaidu looks at her. Her eyes are blazing. Suddenly Kaidu lifts his voice. Nazama has made his decision for him.

KAIDU: Sound the assembly! Call out the whole blasted army! We're riding to Pekin—after Marco Polo!

CUT TO:

278. CLOSE SHOT—BIG HEAD BUGLER

He is blowing the assembly.

CUT TO:

279. SERIES OF CLOSE SHOTS—KAIDU'S CAMP

With the assembly blowing and the music starting to mount swiftly, Tartars come running from the tents, leaping to their horses—a general impression of excitement, speed and bustle.

CUT TO:

280. LONG SHOT—MARCO IN THE DESERT—EXT. DAY

Marco gallops down a desert track hell-for-leather. The music is riding to the galloping beat.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

281. CLOSE SHOT—AHMED'S FEET

In jeweled and fancy wedding slippers. PULL CAMERA BACK to reveal him in full wedding regalia in his room. Two tailors are putting the finishing touches to his costume. Ahmed is speaking to the Majordomo who stands by.

AHMED, *to Majordomo:* Not bad for a Saracen, eh?

Not getting any appreciation from the Majordomo he orders him——

I want plenty of birds' nests for the soup. And send word to that Chemist Chen Tsu that we will need all the fire powder he can make for the celebration of the wedding festival.

MAJORDOMO: Yes, Excellency.

He exits.

CUT TO:

282. MED. SHOT—LITTLE OLD MAN ON THE TOWER

He is looking through the glasses (props). He looks away and pipes.

LITTLE OLD MAN: All well to the——

He stops dead as he gazes in the immediate foreground.

CUT TO:

283. LONG SHOT (Painting) SHOWING THE CITY WALL—LATE AFTERNOON

(Same as Scene 164) Except that the Emperor is returning and no army is in the background.

CUT TO:

284. CLOSE MED. SHOT—THE LITTLE OLD MAN

His voice pipes the unexpected news.

LITTLE OLD MAN: The Emperor is returning!

CUT TO:

285. MED. SHOT—AHMED—INT. HIS APARTMENT DAY

He is parading in front of a large mirror admiring his wedding costume. Bayan enters.

BAYAN: The Emperor is returning.

AHMED: With the whole army?

BAYAN: No, only his bodyguards—a few hundred men. We could kill them all before they reached the Palace gates.

Ahmed looks relieved.

AHMED: No! Let them come in. Welcome his Majesty with all the usual ceremony.

BAYAN: But——

AHMED: Do as I tell you. And bring the Princess here at once.

As Bayan starts out, Ahmed starts to take off his wedding coat.

DISSOLVE TO:

286. SEMI-LONG SHOT—DOWN THRONE ROOM—INT. DAY

Ahmed stands by the steps of the Throne. Kublai Khan is advancing up the Throne Room. Ahmed bows low.

AHMED: Your Majesty! We thank all the benevolent spirits of land and water for your safe return.

Kublai Khan goes to the throne and sits down.

KUBLAI: The benevolent spirits of land and water did not prevent disaster to our army on the China Sea. Thousands of our men were swallowed up by typhoons. The pitiful remnant that reached Japan must have been massacred. That little nation is not easy to conquer. However, I am still here with my heart still beating firmly within my considerable structure of flesh and bone. (*looking around the Throne Room*) Don't you think these decorations are a little too gay under the circumstances?

AHMED: But you misinterpret the circumstances. These decorations are for a wedding festival.

KUBLAI: Wedding! Whose wedding?

AHMED: Princess Kukachin has decided not to undertake the perilous journey to Persia.

KUBLAI: What!

AHMED: And under these conditions it is necessary for you to sign this at once.

He takes out document. Kublai's eyes are full of bewilderment.

It is merely formal acknowledgment that when I am married to your daughter and you are dead, I am recognized as rightful heir to your throne.

KUBLAI: Why . . . you . . . black-livered traitor. Where are my guards? Peyan . . . Mangalu . . . Nomogan! There is rebellion here—treachery!

Ahmed's tough-looking cohorts appear at various entrances to the throne room.

CUT BACK TO:

287. CLOSE SHOT—KUBLAI

He takes this—comprehends.

KUBLAI: In the name of the eternal majesty of Genghis Khan, I command you to come to me— I *command* you!

CUT TO:

288. THE GUARDS

They do not move.

CUT TO:

289. TWO SHOT—AHMED AND KUBLAI

AHMED: It is better that you sign the order, Kublai Khan—and trust me to carry on the eternal majesty.

KUBLAI: I will not sign that lie!

Ahmed motions to the guards who come forward into the shot and seize the Khan.

AHMED: You will sign first and then witness the marriage. I want there to be no question of doubt as to my right of succession.

Ahmed points to the entrance of his apartment and the guards start to drag Kublai off.

CUT TO:

290. INT.—AHMED'S APARTMENT

The door opens and in come the guards with Kublai, followed by Ahmed.

AHMED: I regret that you force me to use rather discreditable means of persuasion.

He crosses to vulture perch and throws back the curtains, disclosing Kukachin gagged and bound tightly to a post in front of the vultures. The vultures are straining at their chains in an effort to get to her.

CUT TO:

291. CLOSE SHOT—KUBLAI

He is staring forward, half-crazy with horror at this sight.

CUT TO:

292. MED. SHOT—AHMED BY VULTURE CAGE

He speaks as if to Kublai.

AHMED: Come here, Kublai Khan. Let your daughter see that you're still alive.

Kublai staggers into the Shot looking at his daughter, whose mute eyes meet his, as he says——

KUBLAI: Kukachin!

Kukachin opens her eyes.

KUKACHIN: Father!

Ahmed indicates the vultures.

AHMED: If you will study the sensitive faces of those birds, you'll see that they're in a bad mood. That is because they haven't been fed for days. And when a vulture is ravenously hungry . . .

Kublai breaks beneath the strain. He turns, his hands quivering, his voice swelling almost to a scream.

KUBLAI: Bring me that paper. Bring it to me quickly. Take her out of there—take her out of there!

AHMED: At once.

Bayan and a guard hurry into the Shot. Bayan carries the document and a small Chinese ink tray with slab of ink moistened at one end and a writing brush, which he takes to Kublai. Ahmed addresses the guard.

AHMED: Get the Princess dressed for the ceremony.

CUT TO:

293. MED. SHOT—INT.—CHEN TSU'S WORKROOM SHOP—NIGHT

There are several large boxes standing above, one with the lid off. Chen Tsu crosses from his work bench with a large can of powder and starts to pour it into the open box. Through the window at the back can be seen street traffic. Marco runs past the window and ducks into the door, flattening himself against the wall.

CHEN TSU: Marco Polo!

Sees him.

MARCO: Sh.

An officer and four soldiers cross past the window. Marco sneaks to the door and looks after them.

MARCO: Just in time. I thought they saw me.

CHEN TSU: Where have you been, Marco Polo?

MARCO: Far away, but never mind that, now. I want to talk business with you, Chen Tsu.

Assured that the soldiers have not seen him, and have disappeared down the street, Marco comes into the room.

MARCO: I want to give you an order for some fire powder, the largest order you——

Sees boxes.

Why, what's this?

CHEN TSU: This is an order of fire powder, the largest order——

MARCO: For whom?

CHEN TSU: For Ahmed.

MARCO: What's Ahmed want it for?

CHEN TSU: To celebrate his wedding festival.

MARCO: When?

CHEN TSU: Tonight.

MARCO: Tonight! Chen Tsu, you must help me get into the Palace.

CHEN TSU: You need my help—you, the friend of Kublai Khan?

MARCO: I must get in without Ahmed knowing it.

CHEN TSU: Ah, the lion must assume the guise of a mouse so that he may elude the snake.

MARCO: We have no time for philosophy, Chen Tsu. We need action.

CHEN TSU: Action! Yes.

Crossing to the door leading into his house. Clapping his hands——

CHEN TSU: Chin Sing, Ah Sing.

Comes back into the workroom.

CHEN TSU: You must take your clothes off.

Marco starts to take off his coat as the children run in.

CHILDREN: Marco Polo! Marco Polo!

CHEN TSU: Quiet, children!—while you help me to make the lion to look like a mouse.

DISSOLVE TO:

294. CLOSE SHOT—CHEN TSU AND MARCO IN WORK SHOP

The Scene commences in Close Shot of Marco's face which Chen Tsu has almost completely covered with brown liquid. At the moment he is working carefully on *the eyes. As Chen Tsu speaks, the CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL MARCO sitting on one of many boxes. His arms are extended, with Chen Tsu's wife, mother and two children all busy converting him into a Malay. The children are obviously enjoying themselves enormously.*

CHEN TSU, *as he works:* Once you are inside the Palace Gates—what then? You will be one against a multitude of expert killers.

MARCO, *staring at the many boxes:* I'll take care of myself.

CHEN TSU: You display great confidence, my friend.

MARCO: It's a display that costs nothing.

CUT TO:

295. CLOSE MED. SHOT—MARCO AND CHEN TSU

Chen Tsu starts winding turban around Marco's head.

MARCO: How many boxes, Chen Tsu?

CHEN TSU: More than I've ever made in my life.

MARCO, *smiles:* Seems a shame to waste it on a wedding.

As Marco stares at the boxes, we

DISSOLVE TO:

296. MED. SHOT—BALCONY WINDOW OF KUKACHIN'S ROOM—EXT. NIGHT

Kukachin stands just inside the window in bridal gown, looking straight forward. Visakha adjusting her gown. Kukachin comes forward from the balcony balustrade, and looks over.

CUT TO:

297. LONG DOWN SHOT—WHAT SHE SEES—EXT. NIGHT

Fifty feet below is a small hard rock walk.

CUT TO:

298. CLOSE SHOT—KUKACHIN ON BALCONY

She is looking down as if at the walk with horrified fascination.

CUT TO:

299. CLOSE SHOT—VISAKHA AT WINDOW

There is terror in her eyes as she realizes what her mistress is thinking. She comes forward, the CAMERA PANNING to include Kukachin. Visakha cluches her arm.

VISAKHA: Your Highness! You mustn't look down there.

KUKACHIN: Leave me alone, Visakha. I must make myself ready for death.

VISAKHA, *desperately:* But, my lady——

KUKACHIN: Marco Polo never received my message. If he had, he would be here.

VISAKHA: It must have been impossible for him to come to you.

KUKACHIN: He would be here.

Loud knock on the door.

KUKACHIN: They are here.

She squeezes Visakha's hand. Tears start to Visakha's eyes. She can bear it no longer; she runs into the room. Kukachin kneels to do an obeisance to death.

(*smiles*) Good-bye, my dear—I hope we both find happiness.

CUT TO:

300. CLOSE SHOT—VISAKHA—INT. NIGHT

Visakha is miserable. Suddenly, at a sound, she turns towards the CAMERA, but stops dead in the foreground, staring wildly forward.

CUT TO:

301. MED. SHOT—WHAT SHE SEES

Marco is in the act of stepping forward from the curtain. He puts his finger to his lips as he hurries to Visakha. CAMERA TRUCKING BACK to include her. During this whole scene the pounding on the door has continued, and the voice of an officer demanding admittance is heard. Marco asks——

MARCO: Where's your mistress?

Visakha's frightened, bewildered eyes look past the CAMERA. Marco's follow hers and he starts violently as he sees——

CUT TO:

302. SEMI-LONG SHOT—BALCONY FROM MARCO'S EYELINE

Kukachin stands on the balustrade, her hands outstretched, about to hurl herself to the walk below. Marco's gasp is heard.

CUT TO:

303. CLOSE MED. SHOT—MARCO AND VISAKHA

Marco leaps forward through the window, the CAMERA MOVING SHARPLY WITH HIM.

MARCO: Princess. . . .

She turns sharply on the balustrade, staring down at him.

KUKACHIN: Who are you?

CUT TO:

304. CLOSE MED. SHOT—MARCO AND KUKACHIN

By way of answer to her question, Marco touches his arm, his forehead and his heart. Suddenly Kukachin gives a gasp of pleasure, she leaps down into his arms.

KUKACHIN: Marco!

They kiss. Kukachin is half crying with relief. As her lips leave his, he looks down over the edge of the balcony.

MARCO: What were you about to do?

KUKACHIN: They are here to take me to marry Ahmed and I chose this way rather than to do that.

MARCO: What about your father?

KUKACHIN: He, too, is a prisoner.

MARCO: If there were only some way to gain time!

Voice of the Officer.

OFFICER: Some of you men go around by the garden entrance and open this door.

Suddenly the great bell from the Citadel is booming rapidly.

MARCO: What is that?

KUKACHIN: It is the alarm when the enemy is approaching.

MARCO: Then it's Kaidu at last! I must go and open the gates for him.

VISAKHA: Kaidu! He will kill us all.

MARCO: No, he won't. He'll help us, he's my friend. (*he takes Kukachin in his arms*) When Ahmed gets you into the marriage ceremony you must delay. Delay in every way you can. Make it the longest ceremony possible.

He kisses her and starts to exit.

MARCO: I'll be back for you, my Princess, with a hundred thousand men.

He rushes out through the window. CAMERA PANS OVER KUKACHIN to the door. Six handmaidens and guards enter, bow. She turns and ceremoniously exits.

CUT TO:

305. FULL SHOT—KAIDU'S ARMY

Kaidu and his Chief Staff Officer at the head of their men gallop into immediate CLOSE SHOT, their horses rearing up as they pull them in. The Chief Staff Officer points forward exultantly.

OFFICER: Look, Kaidu—the gates are open!

Kaidu's eyes are gleaming.

KAIDU: Then Marco Polo hasn't failed us! (*lifting his voice*) Sound the charge!

A bugler just behind sounds the charge as Kaidu and the Officer spur their horses forward.

CUT TO:

306. CLOSE MED. SHOT—AHMED ON TOP OF CITADEL TOWER—EXT. NIGHT

He is looking through the telescope, as if watching the approaching army. Bayan comes into the Shot, saluting.

BAYAN: The Princess is ready for the ceremony, Excellency.

AHMED, *leaving the telescope:* Good. Are all the gates closed?

BAYAN: All but the West and the gate to the Palace. We're going to close them now.

AHMED: No, wait! Leave them open!

BAYAN, *amazed:* Open, Excellency?

AHMED: Yes.

CUT TO:

307. FULL LONG SHOT—FROM INSIDE PALACE GATES

Shooting through Western Gate with Kaidu and his army approaching and the palace gates starting to close.

308. MED. SHOT—AHMED AND BAYAN ON CITADEL TOWER

With the bugle in the distance, Ahmed is smiling as he looks forward toward Kaidu's army.

AHMED: Now—start to close the palace gates!

BAYAN, *calling off:* Close the palace gates!

The cry is heard repeated at diminishing distances.

AHMED: Kaidu! An ineffectual maniac! As soon as he gets inside the Western gate, close it. Then—you know your orders.

BAYAN: A storm of arrows as they approach—and then Greek fire.

AHMED: I think the arrows will be sufficient. We don't want to waste Greek fire on that rabble.

CUT TO:

309. FULL SHOT—OUTSIDE PALACE GATES

Crowd of peasants, merchants, drovers with horses, etc. fighting to get inside the citadel walls before the great gates slowly close.

310. INSIDE PALACE GATES

Marco enters and starts to fight his way through the oncoming crowd.

311. FULL SHOT—KAIDU'S TARTARS

The Tartars are charging forward past the Camera as if towards the gates.

312. CLOSE SHOT

Marco fighting his way through the crowd.

313. CLOSE SHOT—THE TOWER

Ahmed looking exultant.

314. FULL LONG SHOT—FROM INSIDE PALACE GATES—(*As shot 307*)

Palace gates about one-third closed. Kaidu's army approaching west gate.

315. MED. SHOT

Marco desperately trying to get to gates which are slowly closing.

316. FULL SHOT—WESTERN GATE

Kaidu and his army gallop through.

317. MED. SHOT

Marco still struggling to get through the crowd.

318. CLOSE TWO SHOT—AHMED AND BAYAN ON TOWER

AHMED: Now!

Bayan turns and raises his hand as a signal for the discharge of arrows.

319. SHOT OF BATTLEMENTS OF THE CITADEL WALL

Shooting down a long line of archers with officer in the foreground. Officer receives signal from Bayan, turns to his men.

OFFICER: Discharge. . . . Arrows!

320. FULL SHOT—STREET BETWEEN WESTERN GATE AND PALACE—SHOOTING TOWARD WESTERN GATE

The rain of arrows falling on Kaidu and his men, horses go down, men are falling. The charge is stopped in confusion.

321. CLOSE TWO SHOT—AHMED AND BAYAN

AHMED: Close the West Gate!

BAYAN, *turning and calling off screen:* Close the West Gate!

The cry is repeated at diminishing distances.

322. CLOSE SHOT—CHINESE OFFICER'S FACE

OFFICER: Close the West Gate!

323. FULL SHOT—INSIDE THE WEST GATE

Kaidu's cavalry still pouring in. Suddenly a portcullis type of gate comes crashing down. Great confusion.

324. MED. SHOT—INSIDE PALACE GATES

Marco just squeezes through as gates close.

325. FULL SHOT—NEAR THE WEST GATE

Arrows still pouring in. Kaidu and his men retreat in confusion, find the West gate closed and retire right and left on the street that runs along the West gate. They now have momentary protection from the stream of arrows back of the houses.

326. SEMI-LONG SHOT—OUTSIDE THE PALACE GATES—SHOOTING TOWARDS THE GATES WHICH HAVE JUST CLOSED

The shot is full of people, children, peasants, merchants, etc., beating on the gate desperately, imploring it to be opened. Arrows descending all around, people fall shrieking. Marco leaps forward across a cart which stands with frightened, rearing horse athwart the gate. Dozens of boxes with which the cart has been laden have fallen just in front of the cart—Chen Tsu's gun-powder boxes. Marco finds himself face to face with Chen Tsu in foreground, indicating the fallen boxes.

MARCO: Well done, Chen Tsu.

He seizes the mace of a dead soldier, striking the lower corner of a box of powder on the cart. Instantly the gunpowder starts to run out.

CHEN TSU: Marco Polo! What are you doing?

Marco doesn't answer but seizes the whip out of Chen Tsu's hand and then exits.

327. MED. SHOT—BESIDE THE HORSE

Marco enters and strikes the horse across the rump. The horse rears and plunges up the street toward West gate, *the CAMERA PANNING AFTER IT. A stream of gun-powder falls from the punctured box, leaving a trail of gun-powder up the street.*

328. MED. CLOSE SHOT

Marco exultantly watching the departing horse and cart. Chen Tsu enters.

MARCO: I've got to get to Kaidu!

CHEN TSU: But you can't go down that street. Come with me, I know a way.

Chen Tsu grabs Marco's arm and runs with him towards the wall to gain some protection from the falling arrows.

329. SHOOTING DOWN THE STREET PARALLEL TO THE CITY WALL

Kaidu, Binguccio and two of his officers in the foreground. They give way as the horse and cart come in from BEHIND THE CAMERA, dashing madly down the street.

330. MED. SHOT—KAIDU, OFFICER AND BINGUCCIO

KAIDU: It's a trap! Marco Polo has led us into a trap!

BINGUCCIO: Marco wouldn't do that!

KAIDU: Then where in the name of every devil is he?

331. SEMI-LONG SHOT—STEPS IN CITY WALL—MARCO AND CHEN TSU

With the sound of the battle nearby, Marco and Chen Tsu hurry up narrow steps in the wall, ducking low as if to escape the singing arrows.

CUT TO:

332. FULL SHOT—AHMED'S APARTMENT

The wedding ceremony. Kukachin, Kublai, handmaidens, guards, priests, and Ahmed.

PRIEST: It is ordained that each man shall spend those years in the company of a woman who shall be his wife, his servant, and mother of the children with whom he may be blessed.

CUT TO:

333. NARROW SIDE STREET RUNNING PERPENDICULAR TO CITY WALL

Marco and Chen Tsu dodging arrows on their way.

CUT TO:

334. AHMED'S APARTMENT

The wedding ceremony is going on.

PRIEST: The gods in their infinite wisdom will see in this union a true realization of that mutual love which makes life bearable and perpetual among the race of men. . . .

CUT TO:

335. SEMI-LONG SHOT—UNDER ARCH OF WEST GATE—EXT. NIGHT

Kaidu, officers, horses, and guards in the comparative shelter of the Western gate. Kaidu is pacing up and down, very disturbed. Binguccio sits on a stone mounting block.

KAIDU: It's Marco Polo who's to blame for this.

Binguccio shakes his head weakly.

BINGUCCIO: Not Marco! I tell you, you must be wrong.

Irritated beyond measure, Kaidu stops dead in front of Binguccio.

KAIDU: Ah! I'm tired of hearing you say that! (*to guard*) Off with his head!

BINGUCCIO, *starting:* Whose? Mine!

OFFICER: Yours.

Binguccio starts to his feet.

BINGUCCIO: Mine!

But he is promptly seized by two burly guards, a third drawing his scimitar.

OFFICER: Shall I do it now?

KAIDU: Yes.

Binguccio is pushed to his knees, his head thrown forward. The guard swings the scimitar up.

BINGUCCIO, *terrified:* Ow!

CUT TO:

336. CLOSE SHOT—OFFICER BY STEPS IN THE WALL

A narrow stone stairway runs up inside the wall as if to the city battlements. An officer is looking up the stairway, shouting excitedly over his shoulder as if to Kaidu.

OFFICER: Lord Kaidu! He's here! He's here!

337. CLOSE SHOT—KAIDU

His head turns sharply.

KAIDU: Marco Polo!

CUT TO:

338. CLOSE SHOT—BINGUCCIO

He almost faints with relief.

CUT TO:

339. MED. SHOT—BOTTOM OF NARROW STEPS

Marco and Chen Tsu come down the steps as if off the city wall. The CAMERA PANS to include Kaidu and Binguccio, who hurry forward to meet Marco.

KAIDU: Marco!

BINGUCCIO: Praise all the saints, Marco, that you came in time.

MARCO, *interrupting:* We can eliminate the greetings. (*to Kaidu*) We must attack now.

CUT TO:

340. MED. SHOT—KAIDU, MARCO AND CHEN TSU

This is a Reverse Shot, with Kaidu, Marco, Chen Tsu, and officers in the foreground, the empty street beyond, leading up to the powerful Citadel Gate. Kaidu glances towards the Gate.

KAIDU: Attack? With my army outside the gate.

MARCO: How many men have you here?

KAIDU: Less than a hundred.

MARCO: It's enough. I'll take you into the Palace—to the throne itself. But there can't be a moment's hesitation . . . or we're all doomed! Kaidu . . . we've got to start . . . *now!*

KAIDU, *to his Staff:* Sound the assembly!

A Trumpeter nearby sounds the assembly. Instantly there is movement and bustle, Tartars wheeling across the Shot on their ponies, etc.

CUT TO:

341. LONG SHOT—STREET AND WEST GATE

With the bugle blowing, Tartars are running, leaping on horseback, swinging round, preparing for the attack.

CUT TO:

342. SEMI-LONG SHOT—KAIDU, MARCO AND OFFICERS UNDER ARCH

With the bustle of the Tartar Cavalry around them, Kaidu says to Marco——

KAIDU: All right, Marco Polo. What's the trick?

MARCO: Give me some torches!

KAIDU, *passing it on:* Torches!

MARCO: Are your men ready?

KAIDU: Yes.

At this moment a soldier enters carrying two lighted torches. Marco takes them.

MARCO: Then, here's the trick!

He throws both torches forward towards the trail of gun-powder on the road.

CUT TO:

343. SEMI-LONG SHOT—GUN-POWDER ON THE ROAD

The torches land on the powder, igniting it. At once a sheet of flame starts to race towards the Citadel Gate.

344. LONG SHOT—BURNING GUN-POWDER

The trail of gun-powder is racing up the street.

345. LONG SHOT—STREET FROM CITADEL GATE

The trail of blazing gun-powder is approaching the gate. The Big Heads of the Three Officers are in the foreground as they look down puzzled.

FIRST OFFICER: A fire snake!

CUT TO:

346. SEMI-LONG SHOT—BLAZING GUN-POWDER

The blazing trail rushes away from the CAMERA which PANS UP to include the Citadel Gate. The fire reaches the tumbled boxes, which start to ignite at once.

CUT TO:

347. MED. CLOSE SHOT—OFFICERS ON CITADEL TOWER

They're staring down. The Second Officer shouts, alarmed——

SECOND OFFICER: Get water!

All three turn as if to fetch water.

CUT TO:

348. MED. SHOT—FLASH—KAIDU, MARCO AND GROUP BELOW—WEST GATE

They are looking forward.

CUT TO:

349. LONG SHOT—CITADEL GATE FROM STREET

Suddenly the whole of the Citadel Gate is blown to atoms—a terrific detonation. We see the tower crumbling and falling amid rising flame.

CUT TO:

350. LONG SHOT—CITADEL GATE

The whole thing is crashing in—flame rising swiftly.

CUT TO:

351. SEMI-LONG SHOT—MARCO—KAIDU AND GROUP

We hear the roar of further detonations. Marco leaps astride a Tartar pony and gallops forward, shouting over his shoulder as the others also leap into their saddles.

MARCO: Come *on,* Kaidu!

The CAMERA PULLS BACK as a mounted bugler wheels into the foreground blowing the charge. Led by Kaidu, the Tartars spur forward after Marco, the CAMERA PANNING to include the charge up the street towards the smoke and dust of the shattered Gate.

CUT TO:

352. FULL SHOT—AHMED'S APARTMENT

The marriage ceremony.

PRIEST: Do you take this maiden unto yourself for a wife?

AHMED: I do.

CUT TO:

353. FULL SHOT—RUINED CITADEL GATE

Led by Marco, Kaidu's Tartar Cavalry are galloping in through the smoking ruins.

CUT TO:

354. MED. SHOT—AHMED'S APARTMENT

Wedding ceremony.

AHMED, *turns to priest:* Go on.

PRIEST, *to Kukachin:* And you, Princess Kukachin, do you submit to this man as a dutiful woman should to her lord and husband?

355. FULL SHOT—THE PALACE GARDEN

The Tartar Cavalry (probably dismounted) are pouring into the garden. Ahmed's troops are falling back towards the Throne Room Terrace. The air is alive with flying arrows. We see Bayan trying to rally the men. Marco enters (probably on horseback), leaps off and dashes for the Throne Room Terrace.

CUT TO:

356. AHMED'S APARTMENT

Wedding ceremony.

KUKACHIN: I, Kukachin, of the house and blood of Genghis Khan through my father Kublai, the Khan of Khans, and my royal Mother Tofar, who was the daughter of Ildabar, who was the daughter of Queen Dir-See . . .

CUT TO:

357. MED. SHOT—INSIDE THRONE ROOM—SHOOTING OUT TOWARDS TERRACE (BATTLE GOING ON IN BACKGROUND)

Marco leaps into the Throne Room, a guard raises his scimitar to kill him. Marco strikes—a straight right to *his jaw and the guard goes down unconscious. Marco runs in the direction of Ahmed's apartment.*

CUT TO:

358. AHMED'S APARTMENT

Wedding ceremony.

> KUKACHIN: . . . who was the daughter of Princess Ming-Tai-So, who was the daughter of Princess Lao-Too-Dse, who was the daughter of Queen Kulche, who was the daughter of Danad—also a queen—who was the daughter of Adebar-Se, who was . . .

CUT TO:

359. CLOSE SHOT

Guard starting to wind up drawbridge.

360. MED. SHOT—PLATFORM AND RISING DRAWBRIDGE

The guard is winding up the drawbridge. Marco enters and leaps for it. With the drawbridge still rising, Marco scrambles over the top.

361. INSIDE RISING DRAWBRIDGE

Marco slides down drawbridge as it rises. Guard hears him, turns, amazed. Marco seizes him by the waist and hurls him over the platform into the chasm below. He grabs the guard's sword which the guard put down to work the drawbridge apparatus, and dashes toward the door.

362. CLOSE MED. SHOT—INSIDE THE DOOR TO AHMED'S APARTMENT

Marco bursts in from platform, looking forward, taking in the situation at a glance.

363. MED. REVERSE SHOT—AHMED'S APARTMENT

Ahmed stands near the trap lever, holding Kukachin, who is still fighting to get to her father. Kublai Khan *standing on the trap turns at Marco's entrance. The two guards are on the other side of trap, away from CAMERA. Kublai Khan steps off the trap. Ahmed drops Kukachin and exits towards the lever.*

364. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO

He throws the scimitar.

365. CLOSE SHOT—THE LEVER

Ahmed enters to pull the lever. The scimitar buries itself in the wall as Ahmed dodges back.

366. MED. SHOT—GROUP

Ahmed enters.

AHMED, *to guards:* Seize him!

367. CLOSE SHOT—KUKACHIN

She gets a bright idea and exits towards lever.

368. CLOSE TWO SHOT OF TWO GUARDS

They grin with satisfaction and start towards Marco.

369. CLOSE SHOT—LEVER

Kukachin enters and gives it a yank.

370. MED. SHOT—GROUP

Guards tumble into the trap.

371. SEMI-LONG SHOT—AHMED AND MARCO

Ahmed is startled, staring at the trap for a moment—then he turns and faces Marco, his dagger in his hand. Suddenly he leaps forward, the dagger raised. Marco darts for his throat. The two sway across the room, with Marco fighting to prevent the dagger from striking home.

CUT TO:

372. CLOSE SHOT—KUKACHIN AND KUBLAI

They are huddled by the wall close to the lever, watching the desperate fight.

CUT TO:

373. MED. SHOT—AHMED AND MARCO

They fight until Ahmed falls into the trap. Hanging on the edge, Marco grips his arm.

MARCO: I shall be going through Damascus soon, Ahmed. I'll tell your seventy-eight wives what has happened to you.

AHMED: I'm sure *you'll* be able to console them, Marco Polo.

Marco releases the grip. Ahmed smiles as he drops. Marco rises.

DISSOLVE TO:

374. LONG SHOT—PALACE GARDEN

Kaidu and his staff officers walking up the path. They suddenly stop.

CUT TO:

375. MED. SHOT—MARCO

Coming down the steps to meet Kaidu.

CUT TO:

376. MED. SHOT—GROUP

Marco goes up to Kaidu, grinning.

MARCO: Welcome, Kaidu! You are free to enter the palace of the Emperor of the World!

KAIDU, *turning to his men:* Follow me.

They all go towards the Palace Throne Room.

MARCO: This way, Kaidu.

CUT TO:

377. FULL SHOT—KUBLAI—THRONE ROOM—INT. NIGHT

Kublai is on his Throne with Kukachin on the steps below. Bayan and Officers stand around. Kublai rises looking forward past the CAMERA. The Officers bow as if to the approaching Kaidu.

CUT TO:

378. MED. SHOT—TERRACE DOORS—INT.
NIGHT

Kaidu and Marco with Officers beyond are entering the Throne Room through the Terrace Doors. Kaidu starts and stops. He has seen Kublai.

KAIDU: Kublai Khan! (*he turns to Marco*) You told me he was away at war.

MARCO, *smiling:* Conditions here have changed. Come on . . .

He leads the way forward, the CAMERA MOVING BACK BEFORE KAIDU and PANNING to include Kublai Khan and his retinue. Kublai comes down the steps of the Throne, saying——

KUBLAI: We beg to welcome you, our honored cousin, Lord Kaidu. We understand that you and your people have been victims of injustice. The cause of that has been removed. It will never be repeated.

Kaidu is quite puzzled. Kublai looks at Marco, who nods his head Yes. The Khan nods to the Majordomo, who strikes a gong and the maidens come running in. Kaidu gapes at all the girls.

KUBLAI: I have assembled the most beautiful maidens of our court and I beg leave to present them to you as a slight token of my high regard. You will take them with you, as your wives.

As they surround Kaidu——

CUT TO:

379. MED. SHOT—KAIDU—MARCO AND
KUBLAI

Kaidu looks at Marco.

KAIDU: Is this *your* idea?

MARCO: Yes, Kaidu. We have an old saying in Venice: There is safety in numbers.

He indicates the girls.

And now I can tell you my third wish—it is that you accept the Emperor's generous offer and go home.

For a moment Kaidu is hesitating. He looks at Marco, then at Kublai, then suddenly he is shaking with boisterous laughter. Kublai laughs too. And adding to the general merriment comes the cheerful prattling laughter of Kaidu's new assortment of wives.

CUT TO:

380. ENTRANCE TO THRONE ROOM

Nazama stands there alone.

NAZAMA, *in a booming voice:* Kaidu!

CUT TO:

381. FULL SHOT—THRONE ROOM

Kaidu turns, shrugs, leaves the girls and walks out of the room followed by Nazama. The court begins to laugh uproariously.

CUT TO:

382. THREE SHOT—MARCO—BINGUCCIO AND PRINCESS

MARCO, *to Binguccio:* Now is the time to draw the trade agreements. NOW!

He nudges Binguccio and walks out with the Princess Kukachin.

CUT TO:

383. CLOSE SHOT—KUBLAI

Sitting on the throne laughing and shaking like a bowl of jelly.

DISSOLVE TO:

384. CLOSE MED. SHOT—THE PALACE GARDEN—EXT. NIGHT

With the CAMERA TRUCKING BEFORE THEM,

Marco and Kukachin walk from the Throne Room terrace out towards the garden. Marco speaks as they walk.

MARCO: Now there is peace on earth—good will to men. . . . Do you feel good will to men, Princess Kukachin?

KUKACHIN: Yes, Marco Polo.

MARCO: It's much easier to feel it in the moonlight.

They have paused beside a terrace balustrade.

CUT TO:

385. CLOSE SHOT OF BINGUCCIO

Entering from Marco's apartment. He sees Marco and Kukachin and wants to attract Marco's attention without interrupting the scene.

BINGUCCIO: Psst . . .

CUT TO:

386. CLOSE SHOT OF MARCO AND KUKACHIN

Marco looks up at the moon.

BINGUCCIO'S VOICE, *offscene:* Psst . . .

Marco looks around, doesn't see Binguccio, turns back to the moon and Kukachin.

MARCO: What's the number of that moon?

KUKACHIN: It's the seventh.

MARCO: The seventh. And you must now go across the sea to become the Queen of Persia.

KUKACHIN: Yes.

CUT TO:

387. CLOSE SHOT—BINGUCCIO

BINGUCCIO: Psst . . .

CUT TO:

388. CLOSE SHOT OF MARCO AND KUKACHIN

BINGUCCIO'S VOICE, *offscene:* Psst . . .

Marco looks again, turns back to Kukachin.

MARCO: It's a perilous journey. But we Venetians are the world's best sailors . . .

BINGUCCIO'S VOICE, *offscene:* Psst . . .

Marco turns and sees Binguccio.

CUT TO:

389. CLOSE SHOT—BINGUCCIO

He shows Marco the trade agreements and puts them in the little bag.

CUT TO:

390. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO AND KUKACHIN

Marco nods and smiles.

CUT TO:

391. CLOSE SHOT—BINGUCCIO

He exits.

CUT BACK TO:

392. CLOSE SHOT—MARCO AND KUKACHIN

MARCO: . . . as well as the world's best business men; but as the world's best sailors we understand all the tricks of tempests and typhoons. I think . . . I think you should ask your father to appoint me as your protector on the voyage.

KUKACHIN: I'll ask him, Marco Polo—and he'll agree.

Marco takes her in his arms. Sweet music is heard.

How long does it take to get from here to Persia?

MARCO: Oh, years . . . and years . . . and years.

He kisses her. The music swells as we

FADE OUT

GLOSSARY

This glossary is appended not solely because it seems desirable to define any technical words or phrases in the text, but also because one who takes up the writing of stories for the screen as a career naturally hopes that, eventually, he will be employed on contract by the studios. If this hope is fulfilled, he will be required to work on continuities. To do that at all effectively he must be familiar with studio terminology and with the various technical devices used in the making of pictures. And in order that he may coöperate with the studio officials and experts, he should know their functions, especially those of the producer, supervisor, production manager, assistant producer, director, art director, sound director, casting director, editor, and others whose duties may or may not be indicated by their titles.

In addition to his concern for characterization, plot, motivation and other matters pertaining to effective story-telling, the writer as he progresses, and whether or not he obtains employment at a studio, will find it helpful to learn how his story is translated into a motion picture through the medium of photography and sound production, and to understand the means and methods by which scenes are joined, blended and cut, and how variety and significance are gained through varying camera distances and movements.

If the amateur has even the limited technical information that can be gained by a glossary, he will be able, when watching a photoplay on the screen, to discern the effects achieved by the various devices: to discover, for example, what scenes were taken with dolly or boom shots, where fades and dissolves were used, and why scenes were photographed at certain distances; and in this fashion he will learn to create his stories in the manner most adapted for photographing.

Acoustics.—Hearing conditions within an inclosed space.

Angle.—The arc covered by the camera lens; the segment of the scene on which the camera lens is focused.

Angle Shot.—Photographing from an oblique angle.

Art Director.—The designer of studio sets who oversees their erection and furnishing.

Assemble.—To join the sections of photographed film.

"Baby."—A small portable light.

Back Lighting.—Banking the lights back of an actor to give the effect of an aura.

Bit.—A small acting part.

Boom.—A mobile pole from which the microphone hangs.

Broad.—A powerful spot light.

Broadside.—A large sheet, printed only on one side, used for publicity purposes.

Burn 'Em Up and Gauze 'Em Down.—To illuminate intensely for a moment whatever is to be photographed and then to tone down the light with gauze.

Business.—A bit of pantomimic action or any slight action by an actor that has significance in connection with the plot.

Camera Angle.—The angle of the view taken by the camera.

Cast.—The principal actors in a motion picture.

Casting Director.—A studio employee who, under the direction of the producer, selects casts of actors.

Climax.—The most acutely dramatic point of a story; the culmination of the plot.

Close-Up.—A photograph of a person or object occupying the entire eye of the camera; a photograph taken at a very short distance.

Complication.—A predicament or dilemma confronting the principal characters in a story and making necessary some decision or action.

COOPER-HEWITT.—A mercury vapor arc light.

CRANE.—Same as boom.

CRISIS.—A sudden conflict of interests or a critical situation in a plot; a dramatic issue.

CUT.—To end a shot; to end the photographing a little short of the ordinary footage.

CUT-BACK.—A flash to something already shown.

CUTTER.—One who "cuts" or edits film; also an instrument that cuts grooves on a wax disc for sound recording.

CUTTING.—Removing scenes from the photographed film.

DIAPHRAGM.—An apparatus to control the size of the camera aperture or the amount of light admitted.

DIFFUSER.—Silk or gauze used to diffuse sunlight or placed over lights to distribute the rays.

DIRECTOR.—The person in charge of the filming of a picture, who directs actors, photographers, electricians and property men.

DIRECTOR OF SOUND.—The person in charge of sound recording.

DISSOLVE.—Changing from one scene to another by overlapping a fade-in and a fade-out.

DISTANCE SHOT.—A very long shot covering a wide sweep of action.

"DOLLY."—A moving platform or truck for moving the camera during the shooting.

DOUBLE.—A person who takes the place of an actor in a scene; a person who performs a feat either too hazardous or requiring too great technical skill for a star to undertake. Usually photographed at long range or with double in such a position that his features cannot be recognized.

DOUBLE EXPOSURE.—Two scenes superimposed on the same negative, combining in one scene two separately photographed scenes, or re-exposure of the same length of film for the purpose of allowing a dual role.

DUBBING.—Re-recording sound; adding sound after a picture has been photographed.

DUMMY.—A figure used for dangerous business, to be thrown over a precipice or trampled under horses' hoofs, etc.; a figure manufactured to substitute for an actor in the shooting of dangerous scenes.

DUNNING PROCESS.—A method that allows a scene photographed in one place to be imposed upon a photograph of a scene taken elsewhere with the effect of one picture.

EXHIBITOR.—The theater owner who shows the picture.

EXPOSITION.—The setting forth of the initial facts in a plot.

EXTERIOR.—An outdoor set.

EXTRA.—A person hired for the day for crowd scenes; sometimes called an "atmosphere player."

FADE-IN.—To increase the light on the frame gradually from darkness to full illumination.

FADE-OUT.—To decrease the light gradually until the subject is in darkness.

FADING.—The process of changing the amount of light admitted to the camera lens in order to make a scene gradually appear or disappear.

FAST MOTION.—Accelerated action gained by slow cranking of camera.

FEATURE.—The main picture of an entertainment.

FILLER.—A short subject used to round out the program.

FILM.—A celluloid ribbon coated with a photographic emulsion and highly sensitive to light.

FILTER.—A device used to filter out light.

FIRST RUN HOUSES.—Larger theaters that pay higher rentals in order to secure pictures immediately upon their release.

FLASH.—A brief glimpse of action differing from the scene into which it breaks.

FLASH-BACK.—An interpolated scene of short length.

FLAT.—A painted scene stretched on a frame and used as a backdrop.

FLOAT.—A painted section of a set wall that can be placed where needed.

FLOP.—A box-office failure.

FOCUS.—The point at which a lens forms the clearest image of an object.

FOLLOW.—A direction in the continuity to mount the camera on some sort of vehicle in order to follow continuous action that moves over a greater distance than can be covered by a camera located at one point.

FOOTAGE.—Linear measurement of film.

FRAME.—The square made by a single exposure of film; a single rectangle of the series that makes up a motion picture.

FREE LANCE.—A professional writer who works independently instead of being employed by a particular company.

GAG.—A joke or humorous bit of business.

GAG MAN.—A person who makes a specialty of inventing comic lines or comic business.

HEART INTEREST.—That element in the picture which appeals to the more kindly emotions.

HEAVY.—The villain.

HOKUM.—Banal situations. Now applied also to a sincere expression of those nobler sentiments to which audiences respond emotionally.

HUMAN INTEREST.—An element in theme or character that offers a very general appeal to an audience.

INSERT.—Any written material photographed and spliced into a scene, as a letter, a contract, a telegram, a mortgage, etc.

INTERIOR.—An indoor setting.

IRIS IN.—To open the diaphragm of a camera gradually until the full area of the frame is visible.

Iris Out.—To close the eye of the camera gradually until the entire area of the frame is obliterated.

Jump.—An abrupt break in a picture caused by failure to match up the shots.

Lap Dissolve.—Double printing on the same length of film.

Lead.—The principal role in a photoplay or the most important actor.

Location.—A place away from the studio where a cast is temporarily located for the photographing of scenes.

Long Shot.—A scene photographed with the camera focused for great distance. Used for landscapes and scenes of wide scope.

Lot.—The enclosure at the studio which is used for filming pictures.

Make-Up.—The application of cosmetics to obtain some desired effect.

Mat.—A mask or cut-out mat placed over the lens of a camera to outline the object to be photographed as, for example, to give an impression of something seen through a keyhole, binoculars, or an archway.

Medium Close-Up.—A close shot that includes more than a close-up. It would show a figure from the waist up.

Medium Shot.—One taken at normal camera distance, from twelve to eighteen feet from the set; a photograph of a moderately distant scene.

Microphone.—An instrument that catches sounds and transmits them to sound-recording devices.

Miniature.—A small set built to scale and magnified by the camera to natural proportions; sometimes painted on glass.

Mirror Shot.—Photographing a scene reflected in a mirror. Used to give depth, to obtain multiple reflections, and to increase size of crowds.

Mist Photography.—Shooting a scene through gauze or with the lens slightly out of focus to give a soft or blurred effect.

MIXER or MONITOR.—The operator who manipulates an apparatus used to control, modulate and intensify the volume of voice in the making of a picture. The apparatus itself.

MONTAGE.—Assembling, cutting and editing printed film to give a unified impression; sometimes applied to a series of scenes unrelated but focused on one idea.

MOTIVATION.—The cause of any action.

MOVIOLA.—A peep-sight projector with earphones used by film cutters.

MULTICOLOR.—A process for making color films.

NEGATIVE.—Film developed after the picture is photographed.

PAN.—A contraction of "panorama"; to rotate the camera horizontally without changing the position of the tripod.

PLAY-BACK.—Reproduction of the sound recorded on a wax disc.

POST-SCORING or POST-SYNCHRONIZING.—Adding sound of any kind to a picture after it has been photographed.

PRE-RELEASE.—A motion picture shown at advanced prices in first-run houses before being released to the neighborhood houses.

PREVIEW.—An advance showing of an unreleased picture.

PRINT.—Positive copy of the photographed film.

PRODUCER.—The person who produces a picture and who assumes the financial responsibility for its production.

PRODUCTION MANAGER.—The person who is in charge of schedules and estimates of cost of materials, sets, actors and equipment, and who keeps track of costs as reported daily by the accounting department.

PROGRAM PICTURE.—A picture planned as the chief feature of a prearranged program released on a definite schedule.

PROJECTING ROOM.—A viewing room with a projection machine and screen.

PROJECTION MACHINE.—The mechanism by which a motion picture is thrown on the screen.

PROP.—A contraction of "property"; any article used for "dressing a set," or called for by the action.

PROTAGONIST.—The most important character in a story or play.

PUNCH.—The ingredient in a story which supplies the emotional "kick."

RECORDER.—Apparatus for recording sound.

REEL.—Metal spool on which a certain amount of film is wound. This amount of film serves as the unit of motion-picture length.

REFLECTOR.—A silver or white-canvased frame from which light reflects upon an object.

REISSUE.—To send out to the theaters an old film at an appreciable length of time after its first release.

RELEASE.—To put a new picture on the market; to offer a film for bookings.

RELIEF.—A relaxing of the tension after a strongly dramatic scene, usually through the insertion of comedy.

REMOTE CONTROL.—The method by which sound is transmitted from a distant point on location to the studio and there recorded.

RETAKE.—A second or third filming of the same scene.

ROAD SHOW.—A "special" which travels with an expert salesman who books it for the large theaters at advanced prices and exploits it extensively. A picture that is "road shown" is not exhibited in the local theaters until about a year after its release.

RUSHES.—The first prints from the negative; scenes developed immediately after photographing in order that the director may see if "retakes" are necessary.

SCENARIO.—A continuity; a story with action, sound and all directions for photographing; a shooting script.

SCENIC.—A short nature subject used as part of a motion-picture program.

SCRIPT.—Abbreviation of manuscript; usually refers to a continuity.

SEMI-CLOSE-UP.—A shot having very little stage space or background, taken with the camera at close range.

SEQUENCE.—A series of scenes in which the action is continuous without any break in time.

SERIAL.—A continued story in the movies; a photoplay released in sections.

SET.—A contraction for "setting"; a room, street or scenery constructed especially for a picture, in which some action of the picture takes place.

SETTING.—The background, surroundings or environment pertaining to a story or a picture.

SHOOT.—To crank the camera; to photograph.

SHORTS.—Abbreviation for short subjects; usually brief scenes, travelogues or educational films.

SHOT.—A scene ready for and during its photographing.

SLAPSTICK.—Broad farce or exaggerated comedy of action.

SLOW MOTION.—Retarded action gained by running the camera faster than normal and projecting the picture at normal speed.

SOFT FOCUS.—Gauzing the camera to give softness to the subject. Generally used in connection with a close-up.

SOUND PICK-UP.—Apparatus or method for reproducing sound.

SOUND TRACK.—A narrow strip along a film which carries the sound.

SPECIAL.—A photoplay longer than the average program picture.

SPLIT-SCENE.—A device used in taking dual-role pictures or in making double exposures.

STAFF WRITER.—A writer who is regularly employed by one company.

STAND-IN.—A person who maintains an actor's position in a scene while the lights and camera positions are being adjusted.

STILL.—An ordinary photograph.

Stock Shot.—Strips of film kept in stock and showing well-known views or buildings. These may be inserted into pictures to create atmosphere or to indicate certain cities or countries.

Sunlight Arc.—An especially intense light used to flood the set from above.

Super.—A supernumerary; an extra.

Superimpose.—Photographing two scenes, or words and a scene, on the same strip of film so that they partially cover each other.

Supervisor.—An executive who represents a motion-picture company in an administrative capacity.

Support.—Actors surrounding the star, especially the person who plays opposite the star.

Synopsis.—The main action sequences of a story.

Take.—To photograph a scene; a single shot. Each time a scene is shot it in recorded as "Take No. ——."

Technicolor.—A process for producing colored pictures.

Telescopic Lens.—A short focus lens which gives an impression of depth.

Test.—A tryout with camera and sound to determine an individual's fitness for some role in a motion picture.

Tilting.—Swinging the camera vertically in one plane.

Time Lapse.—A break in the narrative, usually indicated by dissolves or fades.

Trailer.—An exciting scene from some coming attraction used as advertising on the screen.

Treatment.—A preparation of a story for screen use. It is an intermediate step between the film story and the continuity.

Truck Back.—To move the camera back from the scene while the action is being photographed.

Truck Up.—To move the camera toward the set or object while the action is being photographed.

Vehicle.—A story suitable for interpretation by a particular star.

VIGNETTE.—A softening of the sharp edges of a picture and its frame.

WHIPPING.—Extremely rapid rotation of a camera in one plane.

WIDE ANGLE LENS.—A special lens which takes in more area than the usual lens.

WORKING TITLE.—A tentative title used to designate the picture while it is in production.

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able and unacceptable, and the film story form, sequence and endings; types of motivation permissible in the film story; the necessity of a theme and its essentials; dialogue and its special uses; dramaturgy and devices for securing credibility, atmosphere, pace and suspense; and the effective presentation of emotional reactions, even if repressed or sublimated, on the screen.

The second part of the book points out common errors in the scripts of novices, analyzes story ideas, points out sources of material, advises the writer regarding the problem of censorship, describes in detail how film stories are sold, clarifies the laws of copyright, plagiarism and libel, and has a chapter on the adaptation of novels and plays, as distinct from the writing of original stories. There also is a chapter on technical matters of concern to the screen writer such as connections and breaks, cuts, flashes, fades, dissolves and camera distances and ranges. Finally, as an appendix, there is included the actual continuity from which the film *Marco Polo*, released in the fall of 1937, was made. It is printed as closely as possible to the form in which working continuities are typewritten for the use of the producers.

In short, this is a manual which no screen writer, experienced or novice, successful or hopeful, can afford to do without. It tells everything there is to tell about writing for the movies. It admits the writer to the most lucrative market of his profession.

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How to Write and Sell Film Stories

BY FRANCES MARION